

videogamesanimemoviesmusicgoodtimes

REVIEWED:

FUR FIGHTERS VR

GRAN TURISMO 3

DARK CLOUD

KLONOA 2

AMERS'

REPUBLIC magazine



CASTLEVANIA RETURNS

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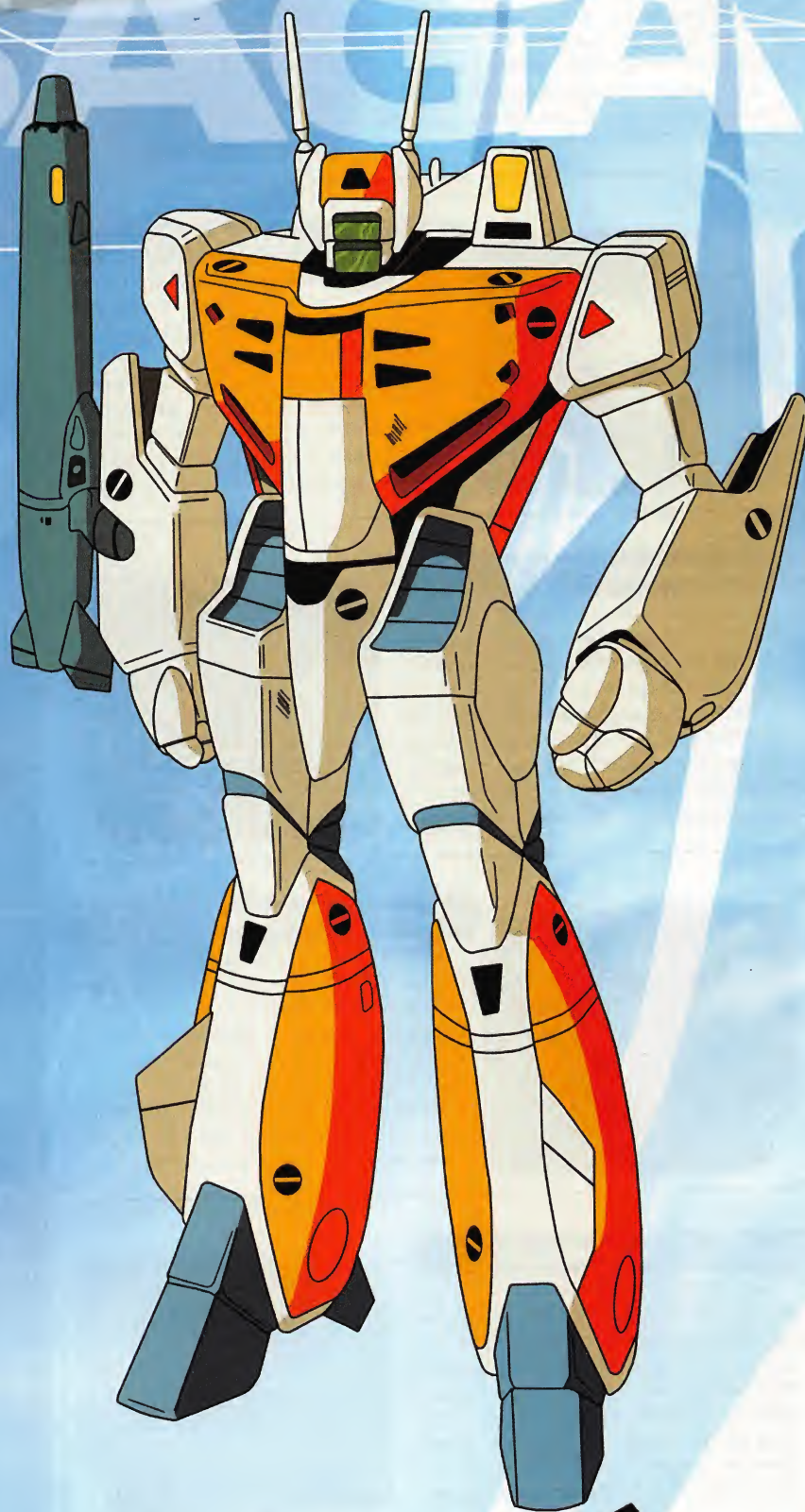
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dave halverson

Going in to his tenth year of publishing "alternative" vid-game magazines, Dave's still in it for the games. Platformers remain his favorite genre, but he's down for all the RPGs, racing, and adventure they throw his way. At home it's all about catching the latest anime between Game Boy Advance binges -- chipping away at all the launch titles -- and watching his favorite animation like *Titan AE*, and *Earthworm Jim* reruns.



brady fiechter

All is well with Brady, because E3 is only a few weeks away, which means that Nintendo will finally reveal the GameCube, restoring balance to the gaming universe once again. Anyone who doesn't have a smile on his face when pondering a 128-bit Miyamoto game might want to find a new hobby. Other things he's looking forward to at the show: *Wipeout*, *Naughty Dog* and *Insomniac* games, *FFX*, *Medal of Honor 2*, *MGS2*.



mike hobbs

GR's resident racing freak is up to his eyeballs this month in *Gran Turismo 3 A-spec*, even if he may look silly sitting in his apartment wrenching the Logitech GT Force to and fro with a giddy look on his face. And when he's not obsessing with the minutiae of his Subaru Impreza's damper settings, you'll find him enjoying the uplifting thrills of *Air Ranger: Rescue Helicopter* as he attempts to atone for some past undefined guilt.



chris hoffman

Working at GR while finishing school and commuting 144 miles a day, Chris has apparently gone off his rocker and now walks around the office wearing gold medals and proclaiming himself to be everyone's Olympic hero. The only things keeping him anywhere near our plane of reality are all the Game Boy Advance titles he's been playing and the surprise announcement of *Mega Man X6* on PS.



steve thomason

Steve started working at GR back in the summer of 1999 as a freelancer for the Internet, then joined the online crew in California full time last year. Now a member of the magazine staff, the man they call Steve Badguy is assuming some of the sports duties as well as anything else he can get his hands on. Steve, a Canadian trapped in an American's body, is also owed cookies by at least one GR staffer.



The last few months have been pretty brutal. Dot-com's are falling like flies, gas is two dollars a gallon and climbing, and investors are running for their lives. In case you hadn't noticed, we ran into a little trouble of our own. When the dust settled, we'd skipped two issues and tightened our belts a bit, but the end result -- our new look (hey, free time's kinda cool!) and a rock-solid new parent company complete with a savvy new Publisher -- was well worth the effort. Anyway, the important thing is that we're back and, hopefully you'll agree, looking better than ever. GR's a little wider, a little easier on the eyes, and ready to drink up all of the Xbox, GameCube, and Game Boy Advance coverage they throw at us to go with our already steady diet of PS2, Dreamcast, Game Boy Color, and all of the other stuff we do in the pages of GR. We've also re-introduced our Techfront section and have a couple more new sections waiting in the wings that will debut in our next issue. As is always the case at this point, your input is greatly appreciated. Tell us what you like, what you don't, or if you think we're smoking paint. After the beating we've taken over the last 60 days, you can't possibly hurt our feelings.

-Dave Halverson

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Get off
my Planet!



DIGIMON WORLD 2

200 DIGITAL MONSTERS! 120 More Digimon than Digimon World! FIGHT FOR YOUR OWN TEAM! Defeat Digimon in battle and they are added to your team!



IMPROVE YOUR GAME PLAY! Escape to a safe place if you're in danger! You can do anything when it's your turn!



CASTLEVANIA: CIRCLE OF THE MOON P.14

Wander the hallowed halls once again. Except this time, you can take them with you.

.039

TWISTED METAL BLACK

Makes L.A. traffic look like a day at the beach. The game that started it all is back... in Black

.034

SONIC ADVENTURE 2

Yuji Naka bids blue farewell with his last hedgehog saga on Sega hardware

.045

HERDY GERDY

The people who brought us Chuck Rock and then the exact opposite-Lara Croft-turn their attention to sheep herding. Yes, sheep herding

.054

FUR FIGHTERS: VIGGO'S REVENGE

Cell shading, new levels, faster frame rate, better effects, and more Fluffmatches... Now that's Fur Fighting!

.058

DARK CLOUD

Part action, part role playing, and part creation, Sony's Dark Cloud manages to succeed on every level

.039



.058



GAME BOY ADVANCE P.18

Not only will Nintendo's Advance reawaken the sleeping 2D giant, but it's a respectable 3D machine as well. It's like having your cake, eating it, and getting paid for it.



Kick Some Rusty Metal Butt!

PlayStation.2

MOBILE SUIT **GUNDAM** JOURNEY TO JABURO™

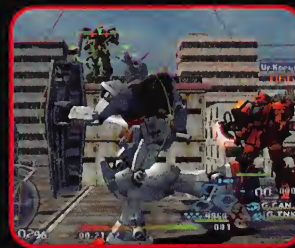
Marvel at the detailed battlefield scenes and mobile suits with breathtaking digital graphics as seen in the movies! Experience firsthand the thrill of guiding your allies in their mission to conquer the enemy in mobile suit warfare. Relive scenes from the TV series or implement your own battle strategies to create whole new story lines.

RATING PENDING



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Licensed for play on the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment systems with the NTSC U/C designation only. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. Manufactured and printed in the U.S.A. THIS SOFTWARE IS COMPATIBLE WITH PLAYSTATION 2 CONSOLES WITH THE NTSC U/C DESIGNATION. U.S. AND FOREIGN PATENTS PENDING.





METAL GEAR SOLID 2 P.50

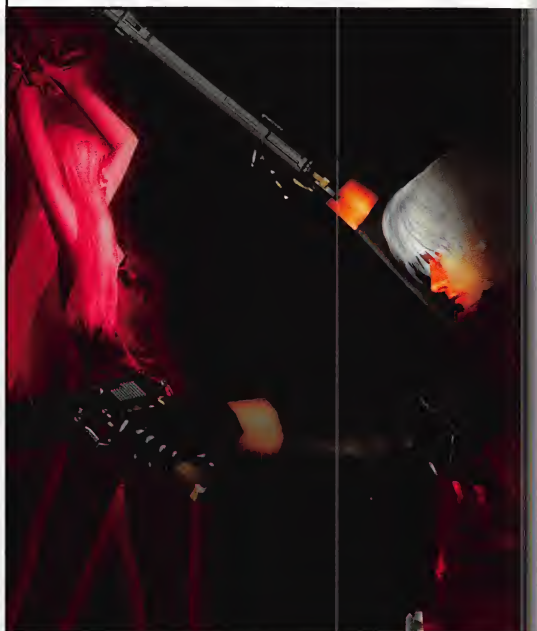
This game will definitely make your snake solid. We take yet another look at the single most anticipated PS2 game.

.002	MANIFESTO
.008	FRONTLINES
.010	DATABASE
.012	TECHFRONT
.028	MULTI-FORMAT PREVIEWS
.053	REVIEWS OPENER
.068	MULTI-FORMAT REVIEWS
.072	MOBILIZED GAMING
.074	GR SPORTS
.076	WORLD REPUBLIC
.078	ANIME REPUBLIC
.083	GR SYNTHETIX
.084	MUSIC
.086	CINEMATRIX
.088	GR-KIVES
.089	COMING NEXT MONTH

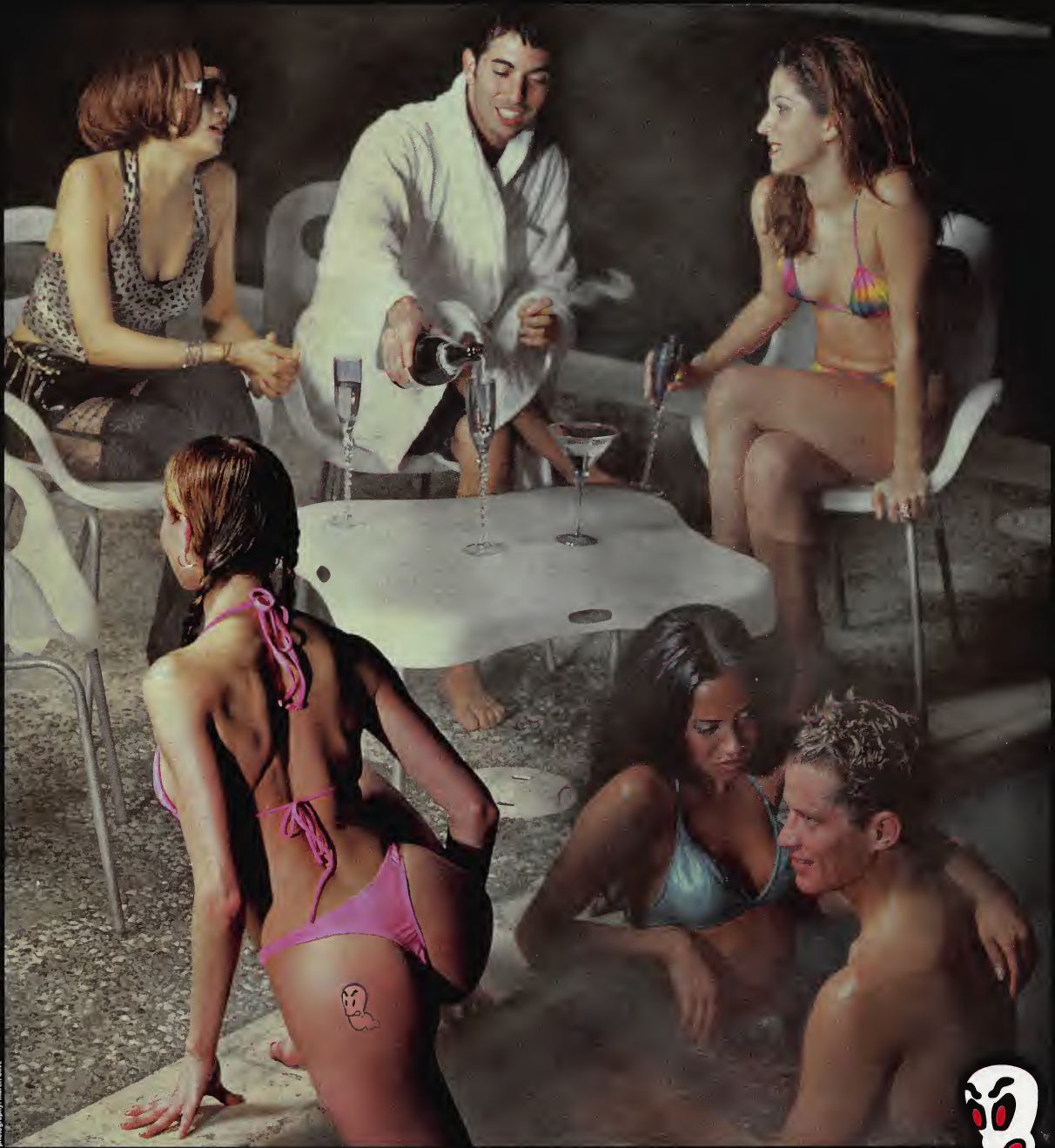



BLOOD OMEN 2 P.38

From top-down to 3D, blood is blood, and Kain is still thirsty for it.



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ESRB

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TEAM 17



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PORTABLE PERFECTION PERVADES PARADISE

The rebirth of 2D gaming began on March 21 when the Game Boy Advance launched in Japan. To the surprise of no-one, gamers from all over Japan flocked to the stores, and lines wrapped around the block in Akihabara (Tokyo's glorious electronics district). After waiting in line for hours, handheld gaming enthusiasts finally got their hands on the latest piece of Nintendo's plan for video game dominance -- as well as the newest Mario, F-Zero, Akumajou Dracula and so many other excellent games. A total of 650,000 units of the 32-bit system were sold on launch day by the time all was said and done. By early April, the figure had rocketed to well over 1.1 million units sold, proving that Game Boy Advance is well on its way to matching the phenomenal success of its predecessor.

Nintendo has equally high expectations for the system in the U.S., where it's set to be released on June 11. "It's not just something [you're] going to use on trips," said Nintendo producer Ken Lobb, mentioning that GBA would vie for players'

time as much as the N64 or PlayStation 2 does. "It just so happens to be a small console, not a console I plug into my TV." Lobb stated that Rare is hard at work on several groundbreaking Game Boy Advance projects, and also confirmed that Super Mario Bros. 3, Super Mario World, Yoshi's Story and an all-new Metroid are coming to GBA.

In other GBA news, Nintendo revealed that in addition to the three Game Boy Advance colors available at launch (indigo, glacier and arctic), a fuchsia version will be available shortly after (it should be in Japan as you read this) and a blue Pokémon-themed variant will be hitting, at least in Japan, as well.



SEGA BLESS THE BOX

Not planning to pick up an Xbox this fall? Well, if you're a Sega fan you might want to rethink that decision. The world's hottest new third party has announced no less than eleven titles for Microsoft's console to be released over the next twelve months. Only four of the games have been revealed: Gunvalkyrie, Sega GT 2, Jet Grind Radio Future, and Panzer Dragoon. Yes, you read correctly, Panzer Dragoon! All of the titles are being developed by Smilebit, save Sega GT 2, which is being handled by WOW Entertainment. "We believe that Microsoft will be very successful with Xbox," said Peter Moore, president and COO, Sega of America. "Our world-renowned development studios have been very impressed with the Xbox hardware and they are excited to bring new gaming experiences to consumers by utilizing the plat-

form's power. We will work with them to deliver the best content possible to gamers." More of the titles are expected to be unveiled at E3.

In other Xbox news, Microsoft has become the exclusive worldwide publisher for Tecmo's upcoming Dead or Alive 3. For obvious reasons, chances are exceedingly slim that they'll release the game on any other console.



OVA&TV 4 Z.O.E.



In a slightly ironic turn, Zone of the Enders, a game deeply inspired by mech anime, has received its own animated series. Debuting in April on TV Tokyo, the 26 half-hour episodes of Z.O.E. Dolores will feature a different set of characters (designed by Hirayama En) from the game and will be produced by Sunrise, the master of mech anime. Already available in Japan is an OVA titled Z.O.E. 2167 Idolo, which is bundled with the Z.O.E. limited edition boxed set and focuses on a conspiracy between Earth and Mars. No word as of yet on a U.S. release but it's definitely coming.



GET A GRIP ON THIS!

For all of you Mega Drive's custom out there here's the next best thing to having a X68000 CPU sewn into your brain. The Mega Drive 21 (out in Japan as of April 27) incorporates the hardware and 21 games into a controller. Just hook this bad boy up to a video source and your a 16 bit demigod. And get a load of some of these titles: Sonic the Hedgehog, Super Monaco GP, Flicky, Columns, Super Shinobi, WC Soccer, Ninja Spirit, Sonic Adventure Hero, Ninja Furiki Cat, Exploration Trap, Mappy, Watery Guy, Ix Vs. Jerry, Ground Sinker, Sonic in Danger.

Ninja Gaiden, Peetan, Space Striking, City Tiger, and Oira Jajamaru. Sonic in Danger? Peetan? What the? We're gonna have to take a closer look at the MD 21. Stay tuned.

GT 3 SALES GO KICKY FAST!



It was a foregone conclusion. Gran Turismo 3 soared to the top of the Japanese game charts after its release in Japan. In its very first day on sale (April 28), 468,391 copies were sold. By its third day of release, GT3 had already moved over one million units. But what was even more surprising than the game's blistering sales pace was that of Logitech's GT Force racing controller. Over 500,000 of these expensive, highly desirable peripherals were sold alongside GT3, making it one of the most successful peripherals of all time. Look for similar success stories across the globe as the game makes its way abroad, landing stateside this June.

MARIO KILLS! SONIC MAIMS! THE HORROR!

In one of the most blatant misuses of the U.S. legal system that the video game industry has ever seen, the families of victims of the 1999 Columbine shooting are suing 25 video game companies for \$5 million in punitive damages. While the lawsuit specifically mentions Doom, Quake and Redneck Rampage as games that cause high schoolers to turn into psychotic killers, the suit goes far beyond id Software and

the other publishers of those titles, and targets companies including Nintendo, Atari, Sega, Activision, Sony, AOL Time Warner, and Virgin Interactive Media. While the Columbine shooting was, without question, a horrible tragedy, the fact that lawyers are trying to use this as a way to line their pocketbooks is simply... well, decide for yourself what it is. The litigant companies have yet to comment on the lawsuit.

3DO GOES AWOL ON XBOX

3DO's Army Men games have been popping up on every system, in sequel after sequel, for the last couple years -- PS2, N64, PlayStation, Game Boy, even the upcoming Game Boy Advance. However, Microsoft's Xbox will have the distinction of being one of the few consoles that 3DO will not be publishing for. In an interview with The Standard, 3DO CEO Trip Hawkins stated increasing development costs as the reason for the decision, and said that small pub-

lishers such as 3DO have to choose which consoles they will publish for with greater care in order to remain successful. However, all you Army Men fans out there can keep your fingers crossed: there's always the possibility of another company porting their games to Xbox, such as Midway did on Dreamcast. Then again, something tells us Bill's heart ain't exactly breakin' over this one.

JUST ANNOUNCED

In addition to all the games featured in this issue's previews section, a proverbial buttload of new titles have been announced that we just don't have the space to cover in full (yet). Check out this monster list of titles coming soon to a console near you:

Capcom

Capcom vs. SNK 2: Millionaire Fighting 2001 (DC, PS2)
Mega Man X6 (PS)

Activision

Spider-Man: The Movie (PS2)
Tony Hawk 2X (Xbox)
Tony Hawk 3 (PS, PS2)
Doom (GBA)
Shaun Murray's Pro Wakeboarding (PS2)
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2 (PS2, Xbox, GBA)

Acclaim

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2 (GC, PS2, Xbox, GBA)
NFL Quarterback Club 2002 (GC, PS2)
Jeremy McGrath Supercross World (PS2, GBA)
18 Wheeler (PS2)
Legends of Wrestling (PS2)
Extreme G3 (GC)
All-Star Baseball 2002 (GC)
Crazy Taxi (GC)

Midway

Mortal Kombat 5 (PS2, Xbox)
NFL Hitz (GC, Xbox, PS2)
NFL Blitz 2002 (GC, Xbox, PS2)
CART Racing (PS2)
Spy Hunter (PS2)
Arctic Thunder (PS2, Xbox)

Vivendi Universal

Die Hard (GC)
COPS (PS2)
No One Lives Forever (PS2)
No One Lives Forever 2 (Xbox)

THQ

Power Rangers Time Force (PS, GBA)
Rocket Power (PS, GBA)
Spongebob Squarepants (GBA)
WWF SmackDown! 3 (PS2)
WWF Betrayal (GBC)

top ten selling playstation 2 titles



1	Onimusha: Warlords capcom	6	ATV Offroad Fury sony
2	The Bouncer square ea	7	Star Wars Starfighter lucasarts
3	Zone of the Enders konami	8	Tiger Woods PGA 2001 electronic arts
4	Triple Play Baseball electronic arts	9	NBA Live 2001 playstation
5	Madden NFL 2001 electronic arts	10	All Star Baseball 2002 acclaim

top ten selling playstation titles

1	Gran Turismo 2 sony	6	Triple Play Baseball electronic arts
2	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 activision	7	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater activision
3	Driver 2 infogrames	8	Driver infogrames
4	Spec Ops take 2	9	Tomb Raider: Last Rev. eidos
5	WWF SmackDown! 2 thq	10	Ford Racing empire interactive



top ten selling dreamcast titles



1	Crazy Taxi sega	6	Unreal Tournament infogrames
2	NBA 2K1 sega	7	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 activision
3	Sonic Adventure sega	8	NBA 2K sega
4	Phantasy Star Online sega	9	Tomb Raider: Last Rev. eidos
5	Daytona USA sega	10	NFL 2K1 sega

top ten selling nintendo64 titles

1	Pokémon Stadium 2 nintendo	6	Pokémon Stadium nintendo
2	Paper Mario nintendo	7	Zelda: Majora's Mask nintendo
3	Conker's Bad Fur Day nintendo	8	Super Mario 64 nintendo
4	Super Smash Bros. nintendo	9	The World Is Not Enough electronic arts
5	Donkey Kong 64 nintendo	10	Mario Kart 64 nintendo



top ten selling handheld titles



1	Pokémon Silver nintendo	6	Pokémon Yellow nintendo
2	Pokémon Gold nintendo	7	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater activision
3	Mario Tennis nintendo	8	Super Mario Bros. Deluxe nintendo
4	Scooby Doo thq	9	Spongebob Squarepants thq
5	Power Puff: Battle Him bam!	10	Donkey Kong Country nintendo

GAMERS' REPUBLIC [TOP TEN GAMES]

dave halverson



1	Fur Fighters VR	playstation2
2	Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	playstation2
3	Dark Cloud	playstation2
4	Castlevania CotM	game boy advance
5	Sonic Adventure 2	dreamcast
6	Super Mario Advance	game boy advance
7	MDK 2 Armageddon	playstation2
8	F-Zero	game boy advance
9	Devil May Cry Demo	playstation2
10	Wai-Wai Racing	game boy advance

brady fiechter



1	Devil May Cry Demo	playstation2
2	MDK Armageddon	playstation2
3	Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	playstation2
4	Castlevania CotM	gb advance
5	Klonoa 2	playstation2
6	Super Mario Advance	gb advance
7	Castlevania SotN	gb advance
8	Shadow of Destiny	playstation2
9	Z.O.E.	playstation2
10	Metal Slug X	playstation2

mike hobbs



1	Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	playstation 2
2	Super Mario Advance	game boy advance
3	F-Zero for GBA	game boy advance
4	Klonoa 2	playstation 2
5	Air Ranger: Rescue Heli	playstation 2
6	Mario Party 3	nintendo 64
7	Z.O.E	playstation 2
8	Extermination	playstation 2
9	Confidential Mission	playstation 2
10	MTV Music Generator 2	playstation 2

chris hoffman



1	Castlevania CotM	game boy advance
2	Super Mario Advance	game boy advance
3	Zelda: Oracle of Ages	game boy color
4	Zelda: Oracle of Seasons	game boy color
5	Metal Slug X	playstation
6	Fire Pro Wrestling A	game boy advance
7	Dodge Ball Advance	game boy advance
8	Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	playstation 2
9	Zelda: Majora's Mask	nintendo 64
10	Konami Krazy Racing	game boy advance

steve thomason



1	Devil May Cry Demo	playstation 2
2	Metal Gear Solid 2	playstation 2
3	Klonoa 2	playstation 2
4	Sonic Adventure 2	dreamcast
5	Shenmue	dreamcast
6	Mario Party 3	nintendo 64
7	Super Mario Advance	game boy advance
8	Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	playstation 2
9	Crazy Taxi 2	dreamcast
10	Alone in the Dark	playstation

nelson lui



1	Sakura Taisen 3	dreamcast
2	Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	playstation 2
3	Devil May Cry Demo	playstation 2
4	Klonoa 2	playstation 2
5	Winning Eleven 5	playstation 2
6	F-Zero for GBA	game boy advance
7	Metal Gear Solid 2	playstation 2
8	Z.O.E.	playstation 2
9	Love Hina Smile Again	dreamcast
10	Final Fantasy IX	playstation

GAMERS' REPUBLIC READER'S TOP TEN

email your top ten picks to sthomason@gamersrepublic.com, and you're automatically entered to win cool free stuff! This month we're giving away Spawn V figures. So git'ta writin', by cracky!

1	Kageki	genesis	6	Zany Golf	genesis
2	Wardners Forrest	genesis	7	Sewer Shark	sega cd
3	Budokan	genesis	8	Marky Mark (atFB)	sega cd
4	Night Trap	sega cd	9	Rattlesnake Red	playstation
5	Cliffhanger	shes	10	Time Killers	any

top ten selling overall console titles



1	Pokémon Stadium 2	nintendo 64	6	Zone of the Enders	playstation 2
2	Onimusha: Warlords	playstation 2	7	Triple Play Baseball	playstation 2
3	The Bouncer	playstation 2	8	Madden NFL 2001	playstation 2
4	Pokémon Silver	game boy color	9	Paper Mario	nintendo 64
5	Pokémon Gold	game boy color	10	Conker's Bad Fur Day	nintendo 64

GRR
[database]

MPD DATA TRACKING SYSTEMS

Welcome to Techfront. In the upcoming months we will bring you information about the latest, greatest high-end technology, gear previews, gear reviews and an extensive Q & A column. Oh yeah, I almost forgot; we'll also throw some DVD reviews into the mix. To what heights will this take us? This depends on you. From an audio perspective, Techfront is prepared to field questions about products from Class A power amps, digital preamps/ processors, to integrated amps and all in one 5.1 receivers. And that's not all. We will answer questions about video from projection front and rear, direct view TV to 16X9 high definition as well as 4X3. What about DVD players and speaker systems and sub woofers? Just ask, we'll answer.

From What Authority Does He Speak-eth?

The Techfront team, aka Home Theater Revolution, is made up of an engineer from a high-end consumer audio company, who shall be known as Phil, in order to protect his phony baloney job. Then there's the sound engineer from a high-end consumer speaker company, who we'll call Don, and he is well versed in video "everything." And last but not best, I mean least, is me, Derek. I fit in the middle somewhere.

Why Gamers' Republic?

While a lifelong High Fidelity Freak, my daytime job of 15 years was developing console video games. I know that the guy who just finished off three rounds of Tekken Tag is the same guy who can't wait to see Gladiator on his wide screen TV, enhanced by 5.1 Surround. Yes my friends, it's no secret: video gamers also love Home Theater. Why you ask? Simple! Technology drives both industries.

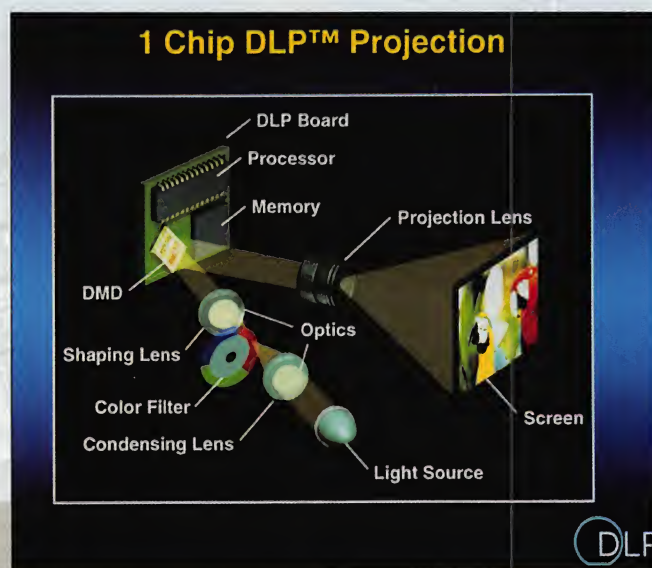
Speaking of technology, I have to digress a moment: I can't wait to start talking about all the new technology that was shown at the Vegas CES Show. On the horizon are the new DLP projectors which may well eclipse the plasma screen. Also the new progressive scan DVD players, and that High Definition DVD player using blue laser

technology which was only shown behind closed doors.

So, without further ado, Techfront would like to talk about an upcoming technology called Digital Light Processing, which we will shorten to DLP. In the past most projectors shared a common technology called LCD. The LCD projectors were good in their time but not without problems such as tube burn in, convergence, gray scale, brightness, don't get me started, I could go on.

Exit analog-Enter the digital domain

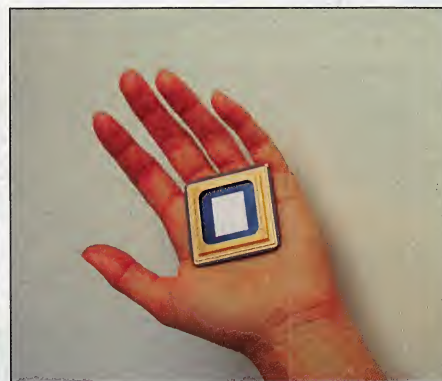
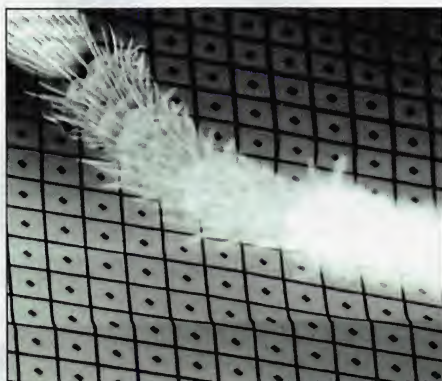
As you read this your first question may be "Is digital a good thing?" The answer is, of course, because digital = Exact CONTROL. Now let's pop the top and see what makes this bad boy hum. DLP technology is a unique way to



project display information. At the heart of the 1,280 by 720 pixel DLP is an optical switch called the Digital Micro mirror Device (DMD). A PhD physicist, Dr. Larry Hornbeck, developed the DMD semiconductor in 1987 at Texas Instruments. "The DMD is an optical semiconductor chip that has an array of microscopic aluminum mirrors mounted on a silicone substrate. By controlling the reflection angle of each mirror, high resolution images can be displayed onscreen," explains Hornbeck. What the freak does this mean to you? In layman's terms: on this semiconductor chip sit thousands of microscopic mirrors each of which swings on a torsion hinge that opens and closes at -10 degrees "closed" and +10 degrees "open." To give you an idea of how small these aluminum-coated mirrors are, imagine one of them is 16 micrometers and the gap that separates them is 1 micrometer.

These mirrors are capable of switching on and off more than 5,000 times per second. Think what this means: insane refresh rates and precise color control. Since the DMD is in the digital domain it only accepts digital signals. That said any device could be hooked up to a DLP projector, i.e., DVD, VCR or cable. These interlaced analog video signals are converted to a progressive signal. The signal then becomes Red, Blue, Green (RBG) progressive data and ready to be ingested by the DMD. The beauty and exact control is that each bit-mapped piece of information is assigned to its own mirror at a 1:1

ratio. So let's say a 640 X 480 signal is sent to the DMD, only a portion of the mirrors will be active corresponding to the signal size, and any mirrors outside that will be turned off. Remember digital = control. Shining light on the DMD and tilting the mirrors creates a digital image. Color is added by placing a red, blue and green color wheel filter system in the optical path. As the wheel spins the mirrors are tilted "on" for the exact amount of time required for each color. At any given instant only one of the primary light colors is hitting the DMD; however, when the filter system spins fast enough the colors blend to create a full color image.





So why is DPL so much better?

The DLP is able to accurately reproduce gray scale and color levels by using 8 to 10 bits per color gray scale. A exact digital image can be recreated time and time again displaying over 16.7 million different color combinations. Simply put, DLP is an optical system driven by digital electronics. DLP/DMD systems do not require periodic adjustment and alignment as do CRT designs and the bulb has an exceptional life of 20 years. DLP based projectors are among the brightest and most reliable projectors in the industry. This exceptional brightness makes them more suitable than CRT based projectors in rooms where the screen is larger than eight feet wide. Another important fact is the seamless projection of the image. Brightness is no longer an issue and one can stand at any angle in a room and view without distortion. As the picture gets larger, CRT-based systems show the gaps between the pixels where the DLP appears to have none, producing film-like images.

Currently, DLP-based projection systems are found in one-, two- and three-chip configurations for use in commercial applications such as video walls, large venue conferencing, portable units, home theater applications and Military Spec. ruggedized monitors. There are several companies manufacturing 60" and greater wide-screen HD-capable displays that produce stun-

ning digital images. Mitsubishi's WD6500 DLP rear projection model is currently in production and represents the first generation of rear projection systems to use this new single chip technology. This unit accepts 480i, 480p, 720p and 1080i as well as its native resolution 1,280 X 720. That said, one can fire up a PC to this bad boy and surf the web (in a PIP window) while watching a movie with perfect clarity.

But that is not the only area that DLP is expanding. How about Digital Cinema? Imagine going to your local movie theater and watching *Mission To Mars* or *Star Wars: Episode I* as a digital movie shown through a digital projector that can produce image quality on the par of IMAX? Texas Instruments and Lucas Films did just that in 1999 and produced a digital version of *Star Wars*, *Toy Story 2*, and others to the delight of movie audiences worldwide. While these titles were designed as computer generated films, the technology is not restricted to them. Conventional film can be converted to data and then displayed with a Digital Light Processor. For this technology to really come into its own, moving pictures must be produced digitally from start to finish.

Another area under development is Digital Photofinishing which is expected to replace standard photo development. This and other designs promise to transform the way these respective industries do business in the digital age of the 21st century. For the consumer we can expect higher quality products at much lower cost than existing technology due to the lower cost of DLP manufacturing. We are truly entering a new age of digital manufacturing and processing where everyone will benefit by higher quality and lower cost.

- Home Theater Revolution

Don't forget to send your questions for the Techfront Q & A! Drop us a line at: Gamers' Republic
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32123 Lindero Cyn. Rd., Suite 215
Westlake Village, CA 91361



BELOW ARE THE SPECIFICATIONS FOR MITSUBISHI'S WD-65000, ONE OF THE FIRST DLP SETS TO HIT THE MARKET. YOU CAN SEE THAT THE DEPTH OF THE SET IS FAR SHALLOWER THAN THAT OF NORMAL REAR PROJECTION TELEVISIONS, WHILE OFFERING A MASSIVE LEAP IN BRIGHTNESS AND COLOR PURITY.

► 2001 PRODUCT CATALOG ► SPECIFICATIONS ► DLP™ TELEVISION

VIDEO FEATURES

- Comb Filter
- Dynamic White Level Expansion
- Dynamic Black Level Expansion
- DNR3 (3rd generation)
- Subpixel Digital Pixel Multiplier™
- 480 Source Display Resolution
- 480p Source Display Resolution
- 1080 Source Display Resolution
- Picture Freeze Expansion Modes
- File Mode

DISPLAY RESOLUTION

Horizontal: 1280p

Vertical: 720p

USER INTERFACE

Special Control Features

- System Control
- Channel Control
- RF Memory by Input
- Color Temperature Control
- On Timer
- Sleep Timer
- Front Panel Menu Control
- V-Chip Settings
- V-Chip Lock Feature
- TV Lock by Line
- Display Features
- On-screen Operating System
- Language
- On-screen Audio/Video Adjustments
- Remove/Delete the Input
- Zoom the Channel
- Channel Caption
- Caption Menu Setting
- PTP Still, Still/Slide, and Move
- Multi-range
- Multi Screen
- Channel Preview / Input Stroke
- PTP Store
- V-Chip Controlled

OPTIONAL SYSTEM

- Light Source
- Lens Type
- Front Reflective Surface Mirror
- Horizontal Screen Pitch
- Horizontal Shield™ (Included)

AUDIO

- Internal Loudspeakers
- Speaker Type
- Output Power (RMS/Ch.)
- Surround Sound (Dolby Digital / DTS)
- Level Sound (Volume Balter)
- Tune Control

TUNING

- Two Tuners
- QuickScan™
- SuperChannel™
- HTS/AB Reception
- 115 Channel Tuner (DTS)
- Automatic Channel Memory
- RF/DTSC Preselected Receiver

INCLUDED ACCESSORIES

- Remote Control
- AAA Batteries
- 25 Switch Cable

PC DISPLAY MODES

Input Device	Graphic Screen 1	Graphic Screen 2
VGA (640 x 480/60Hz)	640 x 480	640 x 480
SVGA (800 x 600/60Hz)	800 x 600	800 x 600
XGA (1024 x 768/60Hz)	1024 x 768	1024 x 768

BACK PANEL

128W DLP Lamp

- 9-Element Hybrid
- 8-Element
- ColorFused™

2, Two-way

- 18" round, 1-1/2" round
- 10 watts
- Base / Trade

7 Banks of 4 Channels

- optional (Multi brand compatibility)

REMOTE CONTROL

2 Product Control

- MultiBand VCR
- MultiBand Cable Box
- MultiBand DSS Satellite Receiver
- MultiBand DVD
- Unlimited
- V-Chip Easy Access Key

INPUTS

- Antenna (RF) Inputs
- Gold Plated Jacks
- Front 8/1 Inputs with S-Video
- Rear A/V Inputs with S-Video
- Selectable S-Video Input with Stereo Audio
- Component Video Inputs with Stereo Audio (S-Video/480p)
- PC Input with Stereo Audio (VGA, SVGA, XGA)
- RF Video Input, selectable Receiver (480i/480p/1080i)

OUTPUTS

- Cable Loop (RF) Output
- Cable Loop (RF) Output (Fixed/variable output)
- PTP Audio Output (Sound)
- 25 Switch Output (From 18 speakers)

MITSUBISHI
THE BIG SCREEN COMPANY™
Digital

DLP™ TELEVISION
WD-65000
ColorTuned™ Diamond Shield Included

OVERALL DIMENSIONS (Approx.)

Height	56-3/4 in
Width	57-5/8 in
Depth	24-1/4 in
TV Weight	300 lbs
Power Consumption	310W

BACK PANEL

FRONT PANEL

TOP VIEW

PERSPECTIVE VIEW

SIDE VIEW

REMOTE CONTROL

Notes: Illustrations not necessarily to scale. Dimensions are approximate and subject to change without notice. The dimensions are approximate for general information only. Do not use the dimensions of the product for mounting or installation. The product shall conform to the product design and meet measurements from the specific unit to the nearest millimeter along any internal capacity. When installing the unit, allow for air circulation and ventilation. The approximate dimensions of the product may vary from that depicted on this sheet. Not responsible for unapproved or modified versions.

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CASTLEVANIA CIRCLE OF THE MOON

one of the oldest and most esteemed 2d series
makes its game boy advance debut in stunning fashion

Transitioning from the Atari 5200 to the NES, I went from being a casual gamer to a full-blown junkie. I've been a slave to video games ever since, and one series has been there through it all: Castlevania. My years of rapture slaying assorted incarnations of the dark prince—dodging skeleton bones and buoying medusa heads—has been the cause of as much stress, anticipating the series' next incarnation, pondering whether it will be as glorious as the last, as it has guilty pleasure. Digital blood lust? Or just my sinister side begging to come out and slay? I suppose when something makes you feel this

good, the craving never stops, kind of like being a vampire.

Seldom, if ever, has a single series from a third-party been the source of so much pleasure, save for maybe Contra—which lays slain by American forces somewhere on a PS scrap heap. Fourteen years after the series' debut, the fourth handheld version, Circle of the Moon, represents the rebirth of 2D. Debuting on the Game Boy Advance, the system charged with bringing the true essence of platforming back into the mainstream, it's the game to own at launch and will hopefully leave a strong enough



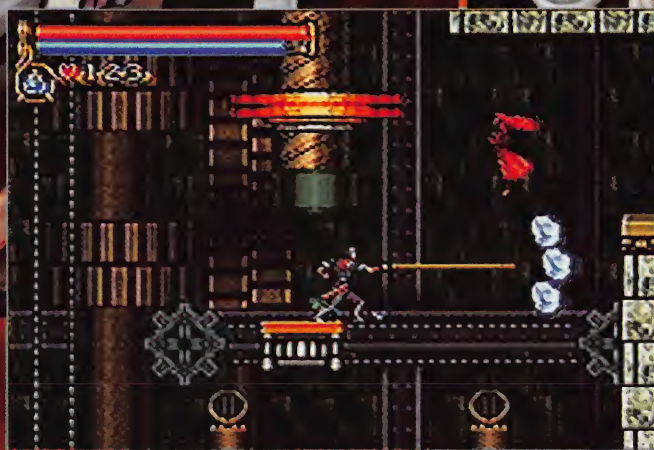
impression to spawn many more 2D sequels. Too bad we're still waiting for the first formidable 3D version, licking our wounds after being hosed on a Dreamcast game—but that's another story. Through the years the most magical moments have come playing Castlevania 2: Simon's Quest on the NES, IV on the SNES (a genuine treasure), Bloodlines on Genesis, X on PC Engine CD, and Symphony of the Night on PlayStation. Every Castlevania has delivered the blood-curdling goods in one way or another with the exception of the abysmal and very grey, shoulda'-been-2D N64 game. Currently the long-forgotten and exceedingly rare X68000 version is being exhumed for a stint on the Japanese PS, while the gaming world holds a vigil for a slayer sighting on either the PS2, GameCube or Xbox (although it would seem out of place). To date, there have been more than 15 games in the series. Now that's what I call sequel power.

Two things are vital when producing a spectacular game of Castlevania: a haunting, dramatic score, and finger-numbing pattern-based gameplay. Every alcove, hallway, tower, sewer, chapel, and garden should keep you on your toes as you clash with minions of the undead on your way to disposing of the resilient Count Dracula. When married to the monumental boss encounters, exquisite hand drawn art, and simple use of a whip that Castlevania is famous for, these elements have delivered some of the most memorable moments in all of gaming. Much to my amazement, the GBA delivers on all counts—including



ing the music--so it's imperative you wear headphones when you play CotM: you simply won't believe the sound being produced by the tiny Advance. The first thing you hear when you turn on the game is the eerie chant from Symphony (...headphones!). You will also need a light, preferably the best one you can find. The game is dark as it is, and details like dripping poison goo are impossible to spot without light, so buy the best. In a perfect world, Nintendo would offer a more expensive back-lit model, but the world isn't perfect, now is it?

CotM is epic in size and scope and doesn't resemble anything you've ever played on a handheld. Imagine the same general formula as Symphony, only harder and more populated. The knights and flying beasts are merciless in the hallways, and they're now joined by an assortment of demonic creatures that make medusa heads seem tame. As for the massive bosses, you can forget about finding perfect patterns or safe spots for most of them. Having the right equipment (if you get the throwing cross, don't ever let it go) is just as important. You can dodge a lot of their attacks, but some will always find a way to hit you. Conquering each one permits you access to the next Magic Item allowing our new slayer -- Nathan -- to dash, double jump, break stone, wall jump, push crates, etc., to gain further access into the castle. CotM's graphics, while not quite on par with Symphony's, are miraculous, given the constraints of the small format; the level of detail being as high as the size warrants. Parallax is in



no short supply (wow, I haven't said that in a while) and trademark locales like the clock tower look crazy for a handheld game. Of course it wouldn't be Castlevania without massive bosses and the games designers obviously understood this--there's a pair of dragons in here that will blow your mind. Unfortunately Nathan isn't animated nearly as well as Alucard was, but hey, who is or ever will be? He's dressed to kill and cut out of the right mold.

Fortunately the developers at KCEK have added some new tools to help deal with the onslaught. The new DSS system -- a series of cards you can collect and equip to perform spells, enchant your whip etc. -- offers a dizzying array of attack methods, and you can power-up each arm and your body, and carry items to heal conditions just like in Symphony. As the 13th installment in the series, Circle is every bit a true Castlevania sequel. Hm...more than 15 games and still not an action figure, anime, or movie in the works? Something tells me vampire season is just getting underway. -- **Dave Halverson**

INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE

circle of the moon producer min wa

GR: Where does this game fit into the Castlevania chronology?

It is getting kind of difficult to fit into a chronology on this title. We wanted to keep it in Symphony of the Night time frame, so it is somewhat later than that. But for this one, other than Dracula himself, we have gone and introduced some new people to the world. We hope that this won't disappoint anyone.

GR: Could you consider this a sequel to Symphony of the Night?

This certainly an extension of what Symphony of the Night was doing. We used that game as the base for this one.

GR: Tell us about the Game Boy Advance. Is it more powerful than the SNES? Music is of course so important to the Castlevania series, how's the GBA's sound chip?

It has been fun to work on the GBA. It is certainly a powerful little package. It does make me nostalgic to have worked on this. Though more powerful than the SNES, certainly, but with its own limitations. With the SNES, there was a TV monitor to work with, but with the smaller display, things have to be emphasized more to make it stand out. So there were some initial problems when creating this. We thought it looked alright on a screen, but when we went to the GBA screen, things were too small. Also, the screen is a little darker than on a monitor, so we had to pay attention to that aspect as well. GBA sound chip is great. Make sure that you listen to the game with headphones.

GR: Is there any music taken from previous Castlevanias?

There certainly is. It wouldn't be CV without it, would it?

GR: Will there be any playable characters from other Castlevania games?

No there isn't. We wanted to introduce some new characters.

GR: How many, if any, of the Symphony of the Night team worked on the project?

The game was made at another studio, so beyond myself, none.

GR: Is Konami going to continue the series on to either the PS2 or Xbox?

No comment.

GR: Is there any chance of seeing ports of previous Castlevania titles on GBA, like Super Castlevania IV?

There is always the possibility, but this is currently not under consideration.

GR: Has the Game Boy Advance rekindled a love of 2D within the Konami development staffs?

That's hard to say, since I would have to talk to all the other people here (laugh). But I certainly had fun revisiting 2D.

GR: The game is set up similarly to Symphony of the Night. Were you tempted to design a more traditional Castlevania game, more like Castlevania IV?

My first CV game that I directed was Symphony of the Night, so

in that, I went back to what I knew well. So to me, there wasn't much temptation there.

GR: Was the approach to designing the game much different than if you were to make a 2D game on a console?

No, not really. As I mentioned earlier, there were things to have to consider due to the screen, but beyond that, no, not really.

GR: How long was the production cycle? Will games take a lot less time to make on GBA?

No comment.

GR: What was the most difficult part of making the game on the small system?

Most difficult... hmm. Difficult to say. There wasn't anything in particular that stood out in my mind about creating the game, beyond having to be careful with the color palette due to the darker screen on the GBA from a computer monitor. Beyond that...we got complaints from our localization staff from text limitations, but I suppose that happens with any handheld game [laughs].



on the next edition ...

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As if 2001 wasn't already shaping up to be a legendary year with three major new console launches, the rebirth of 2D and handheld gaming is also, well, at hand. Here's a look at the first of what will surely be another decade's worth of quality portable gaming.

SUPER MARIO ADVANCE

Developer: Nintendo Publisher: Nintendo Available: June



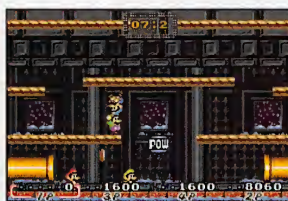
If I were king, Super Mario World would have been the Game Boy Advance's first Mario title. Alas, I am not, so Super Mario Bros. 2 completes the equation of new Nintendo hardware=new Mario game. Alright so it's not really a new game, but it has been given a sufficient makeover, and as a portable title, it's through the roof.

Roughly equivalent graphically to the SNES' All Star version of Super Mario 2, the Advance game differs in that it actually looks a bit better. Witness the huge enemies that now populate the game. And aurally, copious amounts of really cute voice has been added for all the characters.

There is a school of thought which posits that this really isn't a proper Mario game,

seeing as how it was adapted from a game called Doki Doki Panic, and made over for the US NES with Mario cues. While I agree that this isn't a Mario game in the purist sense, I don't agree that it suffers because of it. Playing the different characters (Mario, Luigi, Peach, and Toad), each with differing speeds and jumping abilities, is quite fun. And the dynamic of lifting things out of the ground and picking up and throwing enemies as opposed to stomping on them actually works really well, even if it goes against one of the tenants of Mario-dom.

With news that Super Mario 3 and Super Mario World are both coming for the Advance, those that aren't taken with 2 can at least rest easy. As for the rest, this is a game that simply must be purchased alongside the GBA.



F-ZERO ADVANCE

Developer: Nintendo Publisher: Nintendo Available: June

F-Zero is stunning on Game Boy Advance. It's as simple as that. What an amazing sight to see this perfect Mode 7 raceway speeding by on a system no larger than the old 8-bit Game Boy.

All new from the ground up, F-Zero at first blush looks just like its SNES forbearer, but like Super Mario Advance, it's actually better even than that. The aforementioned Mode 7 raceway now boasts two separate layers on some courses, lending a subtle element of depth to the previously flat surfaces of the SNES.

Amazingly, there is a great sense of speed to F-Zero Advance, making it the most exciting portable racing game yet. The perfected control, just as it was on the SNES, strikes the perfect compromise between easy handling and the sensation of zipping along floating above the circuit; normally, these elements would contradict each other. And the racing action itself is intense,

requiring good knowledge of the various circuits and handling traits of assorted hover racers.

Like Super Mario Advance, this is a must have GBA title. It's a real game, worthy of a place on a full size screen, let alone a little LCD.



PINOBBE: WINGS OF ADVENTURE

Developer: Artoon Publisher: Activision Available: June

Pinobee, Artoon's simplistic yet engaging platformer sends you through 21 levels of exploratory gameplay as a cute little jumpin' bee with limited flying potential. You begin the game with a simple jump/dash maneuver and as you assail the levels, which grow in size and complexity, you're granted more dashing power up to eight possible bursts, allowing Pinobee to float and dash in every direction as many times. Oddly, you can move on

to the next area by simply finding the exit, which is often pretty easy, so I'm hoping to find a little more depth in the gameplay when the U.S. version arrives in June. As it is, I beat Pinobee without ever dying, and that ain't right, even if it is one of the most breathtaking looking side scrollers ever. The music doesn't quite measure up, though, so the fact that it repeats doesn't bode well, especially since most of the launch games sound sooo good. Artoon was founded by an ex-member of Sonic Team (the influence is quite apparent throughout the game, much to its credit), so I'm still holding out hope that there's more to Pinobee than initially meets the eye. At the very least, it's a gorgeous, if overly simplistic, platformer.



Developer: Digital Eclipse Publisher: Ubi Soft Available: June

RAYMAN

Playing a game that looks as amazing as Rayman just shouldn't be possible on a handheld system, yet here it is on Game Boy Advance. The visuals are astoundingly lush, filled with a beautiful richness of color and detail. A vibrant palette highlights the amazing animations of flowers bouncing about as layers of parallax

scroll in the distance. Of course, Rayman is way more than looks - it's a platforming tour de force with loads of moves like the limbless one's trademark helicopter hair spin and launching fists. With more than 60 levels in six themed worlds, you'll be playing Rayman for a long time.



Developer: Million Publisher: Atlus Available: June

SUPER DODGEBALL ADVANCE

Remember how great it was spending hours on end beating up your friends and the CPU playing Super Dodge Ball on the good ol' NES? Well, maybe you don't, but if you were one of those underprivileged youths, trust me - it was a blast and a half. The rules in Super Dodge Ball Advance are simple. Two teams enter the court, one team leaves. The goal is to KO all the opposing team members by beating them senseless with a wide variety of wacky throws and other questionable tactics. Hey, maybe this is what the XFL should have done! !



Developer: Nintendo Publisher: Nintendo Available: TBA

MARIO KART ADVANCE

Everyone knows how great Mario Kart was on SNES and N64, so the question is, Can that success be replicated on Game Boy Advance? The answer: without question. From the amazing animation (it's so fluid you'd swear it's 3D) to the natural control, Mario Kart is absolutely a blast. A whopping 40 tracks are included -- 20 from the SNES version and 20 all-new - spread across 10 circuits. Multiplayer is also loads of fun. The powerslide system from Mario Kart 64 doesn't appear to be in this version, but everything else is so good that you'll hardly notice.



MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK

Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom Available: July



Mega Man Battle Network isn't quite the same thing we're used to from the Blue Bomber. Instead of side-scrolling action, Battle Network is a strategic RPG taking place in the future, and Mega Man is a virtual warrior who can enter computer networks to battle viruses and fend off hackers (hence the game's title). In battle, you get to use a wide variety of randomly selected power ups (health-ups, guns, swords and more) to "delete" the enemies. There are literally hundreds of powers to use, and you can even learn some by defeating enemies, a nice throwback to the games of old.



Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom Available: July

FINAL FIGHT ONE

When it comes to button-slamming brawling action, nothing beats Capcom's classic Final Fight, and now with Game Boy Advance, you'll be able to punch out some punks anywhere you go. Amazingly, the game looks arcade-perfect on GBA -- even better than the Super NES version. All three characters -- Haggar (the wrestler), Guy (the ninjitsu fighter) and Cody (the kickboxer) -- will be included, as will all six thumb-spraining levels; yes, that includes the industrial area that was left out from the SNES game. Capcom is even including a two-player cooperative mode for link play. Old-school fans and newcomers alike should love this one.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER II

Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom Available: September



One of the best fighting games ever is coming to Game Boy Advance. While it's questionable how well the game will really play with only two face buttons, there's no denying that it looks great. All the characters from the coin-op hit -- including Ryu, Ken, Guile, Zangief, Cammy, Chun Li, Sagat, and T.Hawk -- will of course be included, along with all their devastating moves like fireballs and spinning piledrivers. Capcom has stated that this version will be based on Super Street Fighter II Turbo, but whether that means super combos (and Akuma) will be included remains to be seen.



Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom Available: September

BREATH OF FIRE I

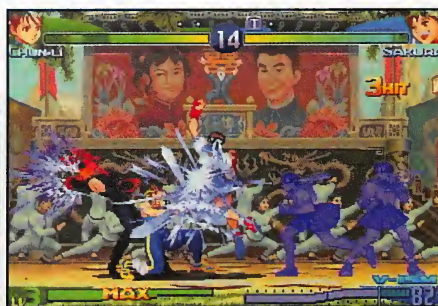
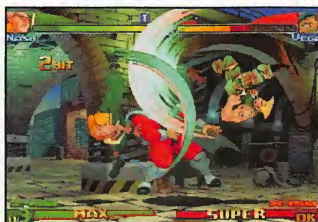
If you aren't familiar with the Breath of Fire series, there's only one word you need to know: dragons. Every BOF installment lets you play as a boy called Ryu, a half-human/half-dragon who not only gets caught up in events to save the world from evil, but also manages to use his Light Dragon morphing powers and kick some serious butt in the process. On the way, Ryu meets up with many unique characters, each with their own skills that can be used in and out of combat. This remake of Capcom's popular RPG series looks like it will be every bit as good as the SNES original.



Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom Available: Fall

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3

Two-dimensional fighting simply doesn't get better than Street Fighter Alpha 3. Alpha 3 boasts an incredible roster of characters, including every fighter from Super Street Fighter II, the previous Alpha games and more, plus each character has three fighting styles with different moves and combos. Other features include a guard gauge, easier throw reversals, and one of the most precise collision systems ever. A link mode will also be included for versus battling. Note that these screens are from the DC version, but if the GBA port of this game is half as good, Street Fighter Alpha 3 will be an impressive fighter indeed.



SPIDER-MAN: MYSTERIO'S MENACE

Developer: Vicarious Visions Publisher: Activision Available: Fall



Spider-Man on GBA looks like it could be the best 2D outing for Spider-Man yet. The graphics are just plain fantastic, and all of Spider-Man's powers, like his Spider-Sense and wall-crawling abilities, are featured. Spider-Man also has a plethora of kicks, uppercuts and other moves he can use to take out the ninjas and thugs that have overrun New York, as well as Mysterio. As the title implies, Spidey's old foe is up to no good and it's up to the wall-crawler to stop him. Mysterio's Menace is being developed by Vicarious Visions, the same company creating the Spider-Man sequel on PlayStation.



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Developer: Vicarious Visions Publisher: Activision Available: Summer



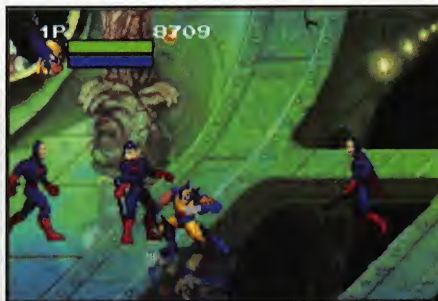
Believe it or not, Tony Hawk 2 on GBA comes extremely close to replicating the excitement of its console brethren. Though it uses 2D isometric-perspective backgrounds for the arenas, the characters in Tony Hawk are polygonal (300 polys) resulting in jaw-dropping animation. There are tons of tricks to pull off, loads of objectives, and phenomenal design that lets you transition and grind like a real pro (though using the shoulder buttons for tricks takes some adjusting). Six skate parks and 13 pro riders (Hawk, Burnquist, Cabellero, Campbell, Gelfing, and more) back up the action. This one is going to be huge.



Developer: Digital Eclipse Publisher: Activision Available: Fall

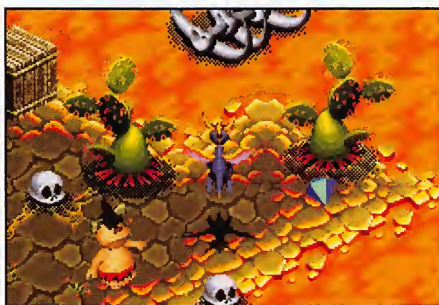
X-MEN: REIGN OF APOCALYPSE

Everybody's favorite mutant fighters are coming to GBA with X-Men: Reign of Apocalypse. This all-new action game featuring the children of the atom has two distinct modes: an action-packed story mode and a battle mode. The gameplay in story mode sounds a little like the awesome arcade game from years back, as players control Wolverine or the other X-Men through several stages of all out brawling combat. Forty X-Men comic-book characters make appearances as the heroes try to escape from an alternate universe where Apocalypse rules. Meanwhile, the battle mode provides four-player link-cable combat.)



SPYRO THE DRAGON

Developer: Universal Publisher: Konami Available: October



Even without Insomniac behind it, Spyro on GBA is looking much better than we expected. Its isometric graphic style is reminiscent of Sonic 3D Blast, but Universal promises it will retain the series' trademark gameplay. Spyro himself will gain a few new moves however, including the Bubble Breath, Electric Breath, and Water Spit. And check out the render quality in those screens! Amazing! Our favorite purple dragon seems to be in good hands and the GBA is rapidly becoming the new home for just about every major franchise character in existence. Can Crash Bandicoot be far behind?



Developer: KCE Kobe Publisher: Konami Available: June

KONAMI KRAZY RACING

For die-hard Konami fans, nothing can be better than the fact that this game is coming to the U.S. As its name states, this kart racer is wackier than just about anything out there, as it features some favorite Konami characters -- such as Goemon, Dracula, and the Ninja from Metal Gear Solid -- competing in comic, weapon-filled racing mayhem. The levels and soundtrack borrow from Konami classics of old (Metal Gear and Castlevania are especially nice) and an intro tune with Japanese vocals is one of the best examples of the GBA's sound capabilities yet; hopefully it stays in the U.S. version.



LADY SIA

Developer: TDK Mediactive Publisher: TDK Mediactive Available: Summer



In this side-scrolling, sword-swinging action game, players are cast as Lady Sia, a warrior princess from the Shapeshifters tribe. After being captured by a race of beast-men (the T'Soas), it's up to Lady Sia to escape from her captors and navigate through four large worlds: the Human World, the Peripheral Realm, Sia's Kingdom, and the T'Soa Empire. Sia can fight with both blades and magic against the 21 types of enemies, and her morphing powers come into play when she turns into a giant sasquatch for boss battles. Lady Sia is still very early in production, but hopefully will morph into something great.



LEGO BIONICLE: TALES OF THE TOHUNGA

Developer: Saffire Publisher: Lego Company Available: September

Based on an upcoming Lego series of toys with a biomechanical gimmick, Bionicle: Tales of the Tohunga is a top-down action-adventure with a unique claymation look. As a member of an ancient civilization of robots, it's the player's task to recover the six Toa stones to restore peace to the land. While still early in development, Bionicle promises to have six large worlds and more than 20 levels filled with traps, puzzles, and enemies. Keeping with the Lego theme, the characters are customizable, allowing you to add new limbs, torsos and masks to your hero, but the purpose of this feature is not yet known.



Developer: Pipe Dream Publisher: Majesco Available: June

IRIDION 3D

You won't believe how smooth the 3D effect is in Iridion 3D until you see it. Much like Starfox, Iridion is a behind-the-ship-perspective shooter, but the clean scaling effect puts anything on the SNES to shame. The background textures are highly detailed and the levels are varied. Like any good shooter, the game features a good selection of power-ups and lots of tough enemies and obstacles; it will take all your shooting skill to get past the legions of robotic enemies and destroy the screen-filling bosses. Fortunately, Iridion has a password system so you don't need to play the whole game in one sitting.



PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE

Developer: Pipe Dream Publisher: Majesco Available: June



Based on the SNES game of the same name, Pitfall Harry Jr. is making a return appearance on GBA. Probably the most impressive aspects of Pitfall are the large characters and extensive animation as Harry jumps, climbs, whips and swings his way through 10 worlds amidst the jungles of South America. This GBA version also features new bonus levels that weren't in the 16-bit original. At this point, it's a bit hard to differentiate between foreground and background elements, added some excessive difficulty to navigating the complex levels, but hopefully this problem will be fixed before it launches in June.



EARTHWORM JIM

Developer: Pipe Dream Publisher: Majesco Available: June



The game that broke new ground in hand-drawn cell animation, designed by the original dream team at Shiny Ent., is making its portable gaming debut on the Advance in spectacular form. Take the original SNES levels, add the bonus Sega levels and you've got a snot-drenched good time. For anyone not familiar with Jim, here's a quick summary: A space suit lands on a worm. He fights a cat in hell and a crow in space. In between, there's fish, phlegm, a princess without a name, a professor with a monkey attached to his head, lots of insane animation and ingenious gameplay. Oh, and cows fly...far.



Developer: Graphics State Limited Publisher: Majesco Available: Fall

It's the year 2146, and a military training program has gone awry. Genetically enhanced super-soldiers have revolted and taken over a secret training facility, and it's the player's job, as the sole survivor of the coup, to escape the facility and take out as many of the enemy as possible. Dark Arena will be the first FPS game on Game Boy Advance, filled with 20 levels of action, six different weapons, and puzzle elements for additional challenge. Naturally, no FPS would be complete without deathmatch play, so Dark Arena has a four-player battle mode for use with the link cable.



DARK ARENA



FORTRESS

Developer: Pipe Dream Publisher: Majesco Available: July



Fortress remains one of the most unique titles on the GBA with its mix of puzzle elements and strategic gameplay for up to four players. The first portion of each stage is dedicated to building up your fortress with falling blocks of various sizes. After building the structure, you can position weapons on the creation, and then it's time to let loose and smash your enemy's base to the ground. "Twerp Characters" can be used to help repair your fortress and perform various other tasks, and the action takes place in different time periods, from the Stone Age to the far future.



Developer: Namco Publisher: Namco Available: July

KLONOA

Klonoa was awesome on PlayStation and it's awesome on PS2, so we have equally high hopes for the game on GBA. In this all-new adventure, Klonoa needs to stop the evil forces that are giving the Empire of Dreams a severe fit of insomnia. As Klonoa travels through 35 levels of traditional platform action, he'll use his enemy-grabbing antics, straight from the console versions, to make his way over numerous obstacles. The hoverboarding stages from Klonoa 2 are back here as well, albeit from a side-view perspective. Given the Klonoa name and history, this should be a top-notch title.



PAC-MAN COLLECTION

Developer: Namco Publisher: Namco Available: July



Namco is bringing one of its most beloved properties to the Game Boy Advance with Pac-Man Collection. Not content being just a simple port of the arcade classics, this game features a newly redrawn and redesigned Pac-Man Arrangement mode, complete with enhanced graphics, new levels, new power-ups and special ghost enemies. Of course, the original Pac-Man will be included (available in windowed or full-screen modes for your viewing pleasure), along with Pac Mania and the addictive Tetris-like puzzle game Pac Attack (which was also on the GBC version of Pac-Man).



Developer: Namco Publisher: Namco Available: TBA

NAMCO MUSEUM

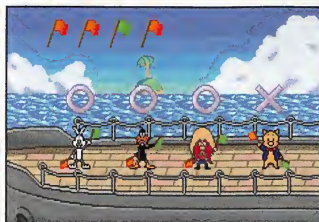
It seems like Namco Museum has been on every system out there, so why not GBA? Like the other versions, Namco Museum on GBA takes several classic Namco coin-op games and delivers them in one convenient, arcade-perfect package. The confirmed featured games are the hit shooter Galaga, the underground action game Dig-Dug, and the sequel to the classic dot-gobbler, Ms. Pac-Man. Previous versions of Museum have also offered Pole Position, Pac-Man, and Galaxian, so we fully expect those to be featured in this compilation as well.



Developer: Kemco Publisher: Kemco Available: June

TWEETY AND THE MAGIC JEWEL

Tweety and the Magic Jewel will satisfy those Mario Party-style cravings while you're on the go. Players can choose from Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, Daffy Duck, and other Looney Tunes characters, and then set out across the world (conveniently in board-game form) to collect numerous jewels which are necessary to free poor Tweety from a nasty curse. Naturally, you need to collect the jewels before the other competitors, and you'll end up going head-to-head in more than a dozen minigames, including navigating pipe mazes, shooting some hoops, playing whack-a-mole, and mashing buttons to carve a statue.



ARMY MEN: ADVANCE

Developer: 3DO Publisher: 3DO Available: June



Yes, the greenest franchise around is coming to Game Boy Advance. In this installment, the play is top-down shooting and adventure as you assume the role of Vikki or Sarge and try to - you guessed it - route the Tan Army. Five weapons are available, including an M16, an M60, grenades, a bazooka and a flamethrower (for that satisfying melting effect) and as usual, the levels are divided between plastic-world and human-world environments like giant-sized bathrooms. Many level elements are destructible, and players will also be able to pilot vehicles. This one will be hitting at U.S. launch.



Developer: Vicarious Visions Publisher: Activision Available: Summer

TOP GEAR GT CHAMPIONSHIP

The Game Boy Advance is going to have every genre covered in spades by the look of things. Top Gear GT Championship from THQ should satisfy fans of Touring Car racing with its good looking pre-rendered cars and real world tracks like Japan's legendary Honda-owned Suzuka circuit, home to many classic Formula One encounters. And unlike games like F-Zero, Top Gear eschews the typical Mode 7 rotating track surface in favor of a more classic ever-twisting strip engine that can be traced back to games like Namco's original Pole Position.



Developer: Midway Publisher: Midway Available: June

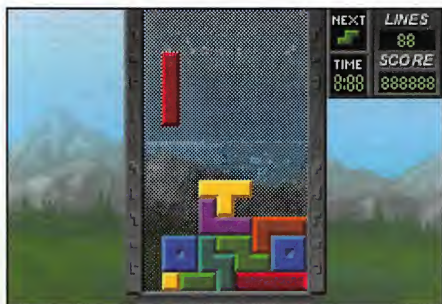
READY 2 RUMBLE ROUND 2

Midway's popular over-the-top boxing series is coming to GBA, bringing its bizarre characters and arcade-style action with it. The sprite-based characters animate surprisingly well (though of course lacking the detail of the console versions), while the 3D ring in R2R2 shows off the GBA's impressive rotation capabilities. Eleven characters are featured (including Shaq and Michael Jackson as hidden characters), and modes include singles and Championship, where you can train your boxer through a selection of mini-games. Right now Ready 2 Rumble has some control issues to iron out, but these will doubtlessly be fixed in time for the game's release.



TETRIS WORLDS

Developer: Blue Planet Software Publisher: THQ Available: Fall



You can't have a Game Boy system without a Tetris game to go with it, can you? Tetris Worlds features several variations on the world's most popular puzzle game, including Bombtris, Gadget Tetris (whatever that is) and good old regular classic Tetris. As you advance in the game, you journey to seven different worlds, each with a different way of playing the game. Characters called Minos inhabit the worlds, and they interact with the player and appear in cinema scenes as you clear levels. Aside from the single-player game, Tetris Worlds will feature four-player link cable action.



Developer: Humansoft Publisher: THQ Available: Fall

JIMMY NEUTRON

Based on the upcoming Paramount/Nickelodeon movie that hits theaters this holiday season, Jimmy Neutron lets you control the game's title character, a 10-year-old boy genius, as he goes on a quest to save the world from destruction. The prerendered visuals look absolutely amazing - everything is extremely detailed and well-drawn. The gameplay appears to be a mix of top-down adventuring and side-view action, but details aren't available yet. At any rate, Jimmy Neutron looks very promising.



Developer: HotGen Publisher: THQ Available: Fall

STAR WARS: JEDI POWER BATTLES

Following in the footsteps of the bigger console versions, Jedi Power Battles on GBA lets you don the cloak of a Jedi and hack and slash your way through levels straight out of the *Episode 1* flick. Players can choose to fight as Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jin, or Mace Windu as they battle the trade federation in 10 levels of action, including the trade federation starship, the city of Theed, and the rooftops of Coruscant. The GBA version of the game even features a link-cable mode where two players can join forces to battle cooperatively.



Developer: MTO Publisher: THQ Available: June

GT ADVANCE CHAMPIONSHIP RACING

The Game Boy Advance will have no shortage of quality racing games. Developed in Japan by MTO, GT Advance Championship Racing is a realistic racing simulator featuring 48 vehicles by seven real manufacturers such as Honda, Mazda and Mitsubishi. The cars are completely upgradable, as players can enhance everything from the engine to grip to the muffler to the air filter, and each has varying abilities in top speed, acceleration and handling. A whopping 32 tracks -- more than in most console racing games -- and four difficulty levels will challenge players, and new vehicles will be unlocked as the game progresses.



FIRE PRO WRESTLING

Developer: Spike Publisher: BAM Available: June

It's a bit of a surprise that this beloved Japanese franchise is coming to the U.S., and equally surprising is the fact that this version packs almost as many features as its console counterparts. The game features more than 150 superstars from over a dozen federations, and players can compete in singles matches, tag team bouts, four-man rumbles and specialty matches, including electrified cages, barbed-wire death matches and UFC-style octagons. Naturally, you can vie for championship belts or engage in 16-man tournaments, and four players can even battle simultaneously with the link cable. An extensive wrestler creation feature is even included.

An Interview with Aaron Endo, producer of Fire Pro Wrestling

GR: Gamers' Republic: What was the process like for bam! to acquire the U.S. publishing rights to Fire Pro Wrestling?

AE: Aaron Endo: Through our Management team, bam! has many long standing relationships with developers and publishers all over the world. As soon as Fire Pro Wrestling came to us through one of those relationships, we knew that it would not only be a great wrestling game, but also a great game in general! After that, it was simply a matter of working out the details with our friends at Spike.

GR: How do you feel to be the company that's finally bringing this renowned series to America?

AE: The Fire Pro series has been enormously popular in Japan, and we are proud to be the ones bringing it to the U.S. With the immense popularity of Professional Wrestling in the U.S., this game is a terrific choice for a Game Boy Advance launch title. The thing about this title is that it's easy to play, but its vast variety of moves, techniques, wrestlers, and matches will thrill even the hardest of the hardcore wrestling game fans.

GR: Has producing this game made you into a pro wrestling fan? Or were you a fan of pro wrestling before?

AE: Actually, back in the days when Jesse "The Governor" was Jesse "The Body", I was a huge fan of Pro Wrestling. Being involved with this title has reinvigorated my interest in both wrestling games and Professional Wrestling in general.

GR: Did you ever consider changing the game's name for the U.S. release?

AE: Nope. A quick check of the web and a few other sources revealed to us that Fire Pro Wrestling has a considerable and extremely loyal following here in the U.S.

GR: Has there been any concern about legal issues that could arise over the character likenesses?

AE: No.

GR: What was the most challenging part of the game's localization?

AE: Testing. The sheer size and variety of this game made for many long, but fun, late-night testing sessions. And, of



course, I can say that within our company, I am the undisputed Fire Pro Wrestling Champion!

GR: Were there any significant changes made to the game outside the translation?

AE: No, not really.

GR: What do you think of the Game Boy Advance hardware?

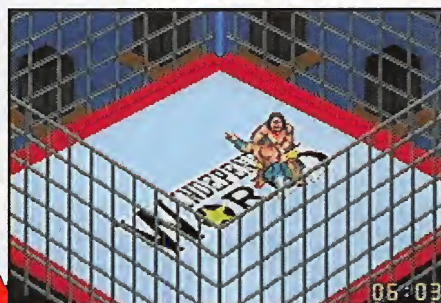
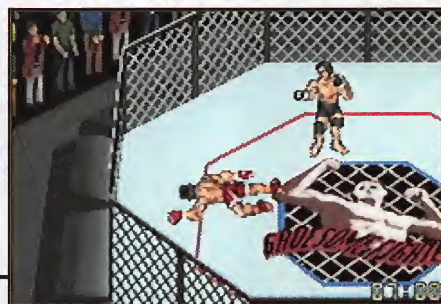
AE: bam! is a huge supporter of Nintendo's Game Boy Advance platform. We foresee tremendous opportunity in the hand-held market and are currently developing seven new titles for the AGB system.

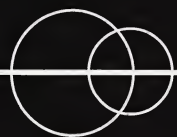
GR: Have you considered bringing out any of the other games in the Fire Pro series, such as the Dreamcast version?

AE: Yes, we are.

GR: Do you have anything to say to gamers out there who have never experienced Fire Pro before?

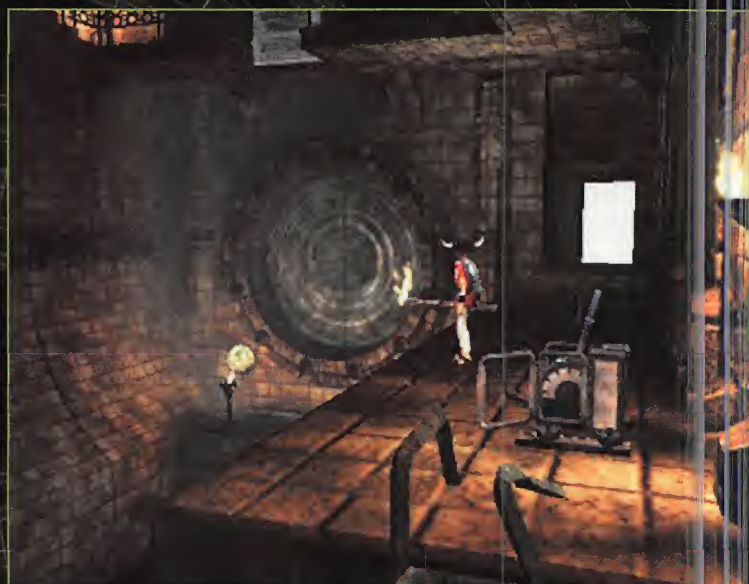
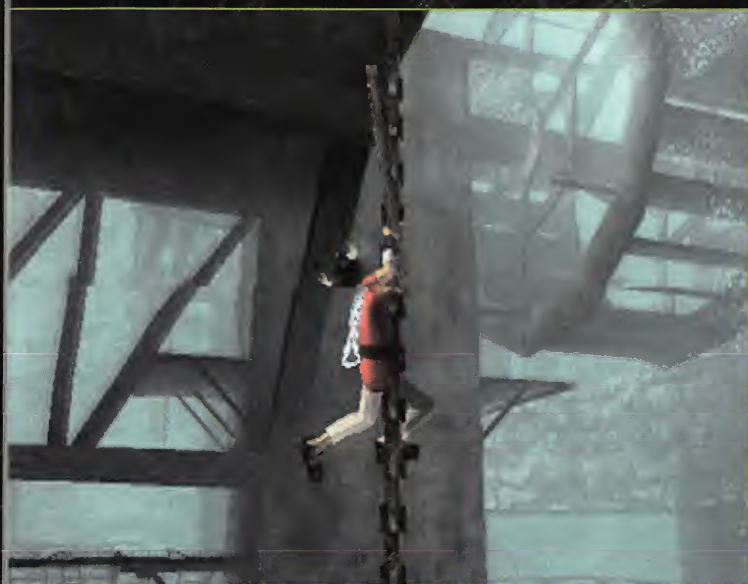
AE: Whether or not you are a fan of professional wrestling or of wrestling games, you are going to love this game! We've packed this puppy with more wrestlers, more moves, more matches, and more variety than any other game out there! If that's not enough, we've included two to four player matches, so you can spend countless hours or days suplexing and back dropping your friends.





multipreviews

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ICO

developer: sony
system: playstation 2

publisher: sony
written by: brady fletcher

available: tba

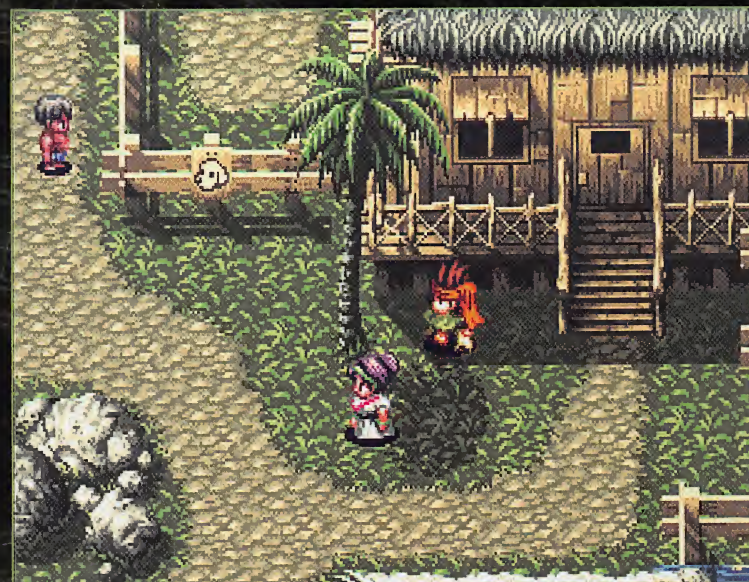
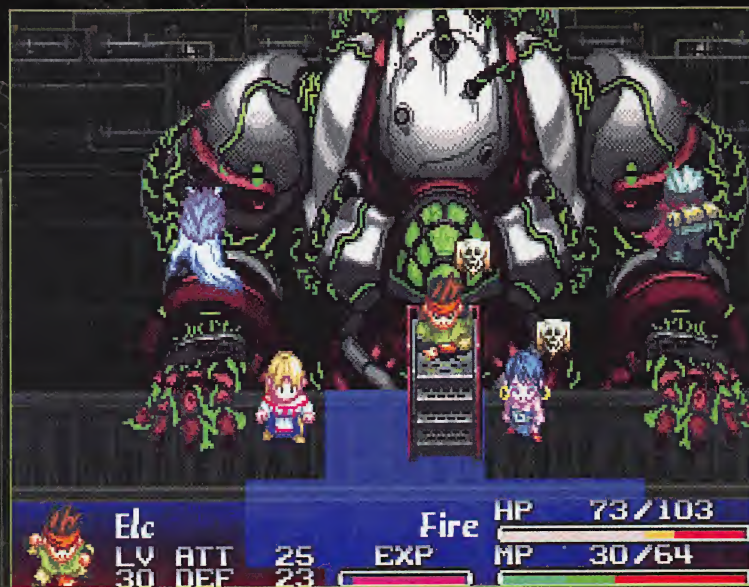
Ico is not like most boys: he has horns protruding from his head. Because this isn't the first time a child has been born with horns in Ico's primitive community, the elder's have decided that evil spirits must be at work, and their presence must be removed through human sacrifice. Unable to elude his pursuers any longer, Ico is captured and thrown into a castle dungeon and sealed away to die. This isn't the most efficient and cost-effective approach to human sacrifice, but it does make a great story and inspire really cool settings for a game.

The adventure begins when Ico frees himself from his cage, crashing to the ground. Lying unconscious, he dreams of a princess trapped within the castle walls. Could this dream be some premonition, some eternal destiny? Could your mission be to free the princess and discover the mysteries of the labyrinthine castle? Wouldn't it be nice if a Zelda-calibur adventure is in the making?

Fight monsters, solve puzzles, jump over chasms, hang on ropes and chains -- it's all here. And it's all contained in a striking place of fantasy and ancient-

world technology, given an uncommon warmth and ambience by brilliantly natural lighting; the PS2 is finally starting to come alive.

One of the more interesting components to the game is the way in which the story unfolds. Dialogue between Ico and the princess is spoken, but interaction with other characters is detailed in a nonsensical language. It's as if Ico is existing in a dream world, and only his own thoughts can be fully understood. Finish the game, and subtitles will appear to communicate the deepest mysteries of the story.



FF CHRONICLES

developer: squaresoft
available: july
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: square ea
system: playstation

Finally! After years of begging Squaresoft, two of the greatest 16-bit RPGs ever are at last coming to the PlayStation in the U.S. The games included in Final Fantasy Chronicles are none other than Final Fantasy IV and Chrono Trigger (so why it's called Final Fantasy Chronicles is beyond me). Both games are notably enhanced over the original versions; Final Fantasy IV (originally released for the SNES in 1991 as Final Fantasy II) contains new cinema scenes, a dash feature, a two-player coopera-

tive mode in battle, a rescripted story, as well as enemies, items and abilities that weren't seen in the U.S. original. Chrono Trigger, which was already amazing due to its characters, graphics and time-warping story, is better than ever with anime cutscenes (complete with Akira Toriyama designs) and a collection mode with all of the game's music, enemies, maps and more. Any way you look at it, Final Fantasy Chronicles will be a gem.

ARC COLLECTION: CHAP. II

developer: g-craft
available: summer
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: working designs
system: playstation 2

Often heralded as the best game in the series, Arc the Lad II (or Arc Collection: Chapter II, if you will) brings players back into a corrupt world of sci-fi and fantasy teetering on the brink of destruction. In most regards, Arc II picks up directly where the first ended: the story continues with many of the same characters and locales, the strategic battle system and charming visuals remain intact, and even some of the music has been retained. However, Arc II stars new lead characters (including Elc and

Lieza, who should be familiar to fans of the anime), and more importantly, the game is much larger and not as linear. The vast quest is now filled with towns, shops, and tricky dungeons to traverse, resulting in a much more fulfilling RPG, and a darker, more intriguing story adds to the experience. Players who beat Arc I can even upload their save data to get the most out of this classic RPG.



STATE OF EMERGENCY

developer: vis
available: fall
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: rockstar
system: playstation 2

State of Emergency is the world's first riot simulator. The evolution of the Final Fight-style brawler, SOE thrusts you into the middle of an uncontrollable riot with up to 100 other fighters, and you can use trash cans, benches, rocket launchers, and

even body parts to beat the hell out of everyone. The massive fights take place in four cities with at least 20 missions each, all with highly destructible environments and characters with their own distinct AI.



SPIDER-MAN 2

developer: vicarious visions
available: fall
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: activision
system: playstation

Spider-Man was one of the best action games to hit consoles in a long, long time, so to say we expect great things from the sequel is an understatement. Unfortunately, Neversoft is taking a pass on this one, but the great engine they developed is still being

used, and is now in the hands of Vicarious Visions. Spidey will still have his awesome wall-crawling abilities, and his repertoire will be enhanced with new fighting techniques and web powers. New villains from the comic will appear as well.



OUTTRIGGERS

developer: sega
available: now
written by: mike hobbs

publisher: sega
system: dreamcast

Without experiencing the online play promised in the final version, Outridgers is a hard sell. Neither the game's single-player nor split-screen modes warrant a solid recommendation, and Outridgers fails as an fps-style game for the simple reason that its are-

nas are too small, the potential for strategy too lacking. The speed is good, the weapons are good, and the look is good, but there is nothing to sink your teeth into. Online play will help matters a bit, but I can see little reason to play this over Quake III.



X-MEN: MUTANT ACADEMY 2

developer: paradox
available: fall
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: activision
system: playstation

Last year when I spoke to Paradox, the main thing they wished they had added to X-Men: Mutant Academy was more characters. With X-Men: Mutant Academy 2, the developers are getting their wish. Six new fighters - including Rogue, Forge, Havok

and Nightcrawler - join the ten original fighters in combo-filled fighting action. Expect lots of comic-book-inspired special moves, along with new backgrounds. Also, the air combat feature planned for the original will make it in this time.



HEAVY METAL

developer: capcom
available: summer
written by: dave halverson

publisher: capcom
system: dreamcast

Collaborating with the legendary HM artist Simon Bisley, Capcom's Heavy Metal arena fighter (running on an improved Spawn engine) looks to put the M back in Mature, with plenty of sex and gore for discerning metal heads everywhere. There are even exclusive

new tracks from Megadeth and Iron Maiden to grind to while you hack and fire at the enemy. The game consists of four teams of three, including the Elite, Agents, Stompers, and Metal Heads. No word yet on a Julie Strain cameo but I wouldn't rule it out.



ONE PIECE MANSION

developer: capcom
available: fall
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: capcom
system: playstation

Certainly one of the quirkiest titles we've seen in a long time, One Piece Mansion isn't the usual stuff you'd expect from Capcom. Essentially a whacked out puzzle/sim game, players control the funny little mansion manager and try to keep their guests happy

while continually expanding business by adding new rooms. The more happy guests you have, the more money you'll make. A very cool and colorful Japanese cartoon look adds to the experience.



RUNE

developer: hammerhead studios
available: july
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: take 2 interactive
system: playstation 2

Sometimes you just want to destroy stuff. Smash through enemies with reckless abandon, blades swinging, engulfed with rage. Maybe even grab a bloody limb or two and use them as weapons. That's what the action's all about in Rune, as Ragnar the Viking bat-

ties through 40 environments filled with the undead and other mythological creatures. An enhanced version of the PC game, Rune features all-new levels and enemies, as well as 15 types of weapons. A multiplayer mode adds to the carnage.



JIMMY NEUTRON

developer: kallisto
available: fall
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: thq
system: playstation 2

What's Jimmy Neutron? Well, THQ isn't talking about the game - yet - but from the looks of these screens (these are actually from the PC Version of the game), it looks like we could have a very cool 3D action/adventure on our hands. The game is based on a CG-

animated movie that will hit theaters this Christmas, but for now all we can do is hope the whimsical look translates into solid gameplay.



NEW LEGENDS

developer: infinite machine
available: fall
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: thq
system: xbox

It's futuristic China, where the nation has been divided up into various provinces, and demons, humans and gods populate the lands. The evil Xao Gon and his half-demon offspring are threatening to take over the country, and it's up to players, as the hero-

ic warrior-king Sun Soo, to stop their threat by basically beating the crud out of them. All manner of martial arts tactics and a variety of weapons are at your disposal in this Xbox exclusive.



VAMPIRE NIGHTS

developer: wow
available: q4 2001
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: namco
system: playstation

Developed by WOW Entertainment, the same folks who created House of the Dead for Sega, Vampire Nights is a horror-themed light gun game coming to PS2 late this year. The Gothic environments, freakish vampires and other massive mutant monsters look amaz-

ing, and the game will be compatible with Namco's new GunCon 2. Six stages and exclusive PS2 features not in the arcade version await those who dare to challenge the darkness of this shooter.



TIME CRISIS 2

developer: namco
available: tba
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: namco
system: playstation 2

Namco's blazing hot arcade light-gun game, Time Crisis 2, is finally coming home. The best thing about this conversion has to be the fact that it retains the two-player mode of the coin-op, and you can choose either a split-screen mode or an iLink mode with two PS2s when you

team up. A new two-gun mode will be added, along with four bonus games, and naturally TC2 will be compatible with the GunCon and Namco's brand-new GunCon 2.



TALES OF DESTINY 2

developer: namco
available: jan 2002
written by: steve thomason

publisher: namco
system: playstation

The PlayStation refuses to die! I swear if it had a last name it would be McCloud. Namco is the latest publisher to breath new life into the immortal console as they've announced that Tales of Eternia will be coming to these shores in January under the

moniker Tales of Destiny 2. This beautiful hand-drawn epic is said to contain over 60 hours of gameplay spanning two massive worlds. If the story can measure up to the game's artistic splendor, we'll have one hell of an RPG on our hands.



PAC-MAN WORLD 2

developer: namco
available: tba
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: namco
system: playstation 2

Pac-Man has come a long way since his creation over 20 years ago. Now making the move to PS2, the yellow one is bringing his pellet-gobbling to 3D in beautiful fashion. This time, Pac-Man must not only stop the Ghost Gang from stealing the Five Magical Golden Fruits,

but he also must deal with an evil force that the Gang has unwittingly unleashed. Pac-Man World 2 is filled with platforming action as well as classic Pac-Man icons from the past, plus new mini-games and loads of sub-quests.



GRAND THEFT AUTO 3

developer: dma designs
available: october
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: rockstar
system: playstation 2

Grand Theft Auto has never been about visuals -- until now. Gone are the simple overhead visuals, the stick-like characters; you can now commit all manner of felonies in a fully realized 3D world complete with different districts and an interactive population.

GTA3 also features more than 80 missions, over 50 unique vehicles that take damage as you drive, changing weather conditions, and more than 24 weapons to aid in your vicious quest for revenge.



DEAD TO RIGHTS

developer: namco
available: tba
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: namco
system: playstation 2

Namco is delivering its own take on the third-person action-adventure genre with the gritty crime thriller Dead To Rights. As a cop framed for murder, players need to use a variety of weapons and hand-to-hand fighting techniques to get revenge and prove their innocence.

Players can target specific parts of enemies' bodies with their weapons, even while moving, and minigames, such as disarming bombs and Matrix-inspired slow-motion gun battles, keep the game from getting repetitive.



ALIEN FRONT ONLINE

developer: sega
available: july
written by: mike hobbs

publisher: sega
system: dreamcast

The cross that nearly all online biased games must bear is illustrated perfectly in Sega's Alien Front Online; as a one-player game, this alien-versus-army combat game is a bit lacking. But things should improve immensely once the game's online

component is integrated; not only will Alien Front Online feature the usual Dreamcast-to-Dreamcast matches, but also support battle with networked arcade units. Very novel, as is the game's ability to offer real-time in-game voice chat.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2

The 2nd Installment of Sonic for the beloved Dreamcast
Is Naka's last hoorah on Sega hardware - dry your eyes and enjoy

As a devoted Segaphile since the early '80s, the arrival of any Naka-blessed Sonic game has always had a profound impact on my life. The anticipation, from seeing those first screens until actually laying hands on the speedy ridged racer, has always been cause for much jubilation - knowing my senses were about to be electrified by blistering speed, blissful music, and aqueous gameplay. Sonic is almost a state of mind at this point, having revolutionized side-scrolling on 16-bit, woven techno grooves into the annals of CD gaming, and having introduced us to the world of 128-bit with a never-before-seen level of speed and style. So it is with both sadness and glee that I embrace Sonic Adventure 2, the embodiment of Sonic past-Naka's perfecting of his Hedgehog saga in the land of 3D. While I'm confident that Sonic will eventually enjoy his time bathed in either the Sony, Nintendo, or Microsoft spotlight, realizing this is his last bow on Sega hardware is a tough pill to swallow.

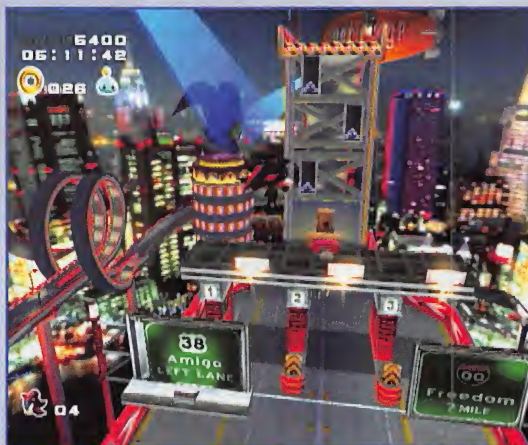
Playing the game, the obvious question just keeps orbiting around my head: why on Earth didn't the Dreamcast not only survive, but thrive? SA2 looks fantastic by today's standards, even with the PS2 on the scene and Nintendo and Microsoft emerging. And since when does a console's power outweigh gameplay and a solid library anyway? It didn't seem to matter when the Genesis blew by the SNES a decade ago with a little help from Sonic and some clever marketing...

Regardless, based on the six level demo played for this preview, the stalwart US Dreamcast contingent can still consider themselves very, very fortunate. Aside from

cleaning things up with SA2, Naka has incorporated the dark vs. hero overtones that helped catapult the import version of Sonic CD to legendary status. Each character now has a dark nemesis along with specific levels in a parallel world. Sonic's nemesis, Shadow, is especially superb. A rocket skating dark hedgehog with mecha Sonic eyes, he moves like the wind and is the embodiment of techno chic and bent critter stylings. And remember the split screen two-player from Sonic 2? Well, that's in here too. And I still say the Dreamcast does better textures than the PS2.

The gameplay has also been polished. Gone is the complex overworld hub, and the caught-in-a-wormhole gameplay has been toned down just enough, replaced by spurts of speed-demon-idus, contrasted by more methodical gameplay environments akin to E-102's from the original Adventure. Tails is now fused with a mech version of his plane and utilizes a Panzer style lock-on for enemy disposal, as does Robotnik. And on the Sonic side, to go with the frantic pacing and lightning-quick new conveyances, Naka has incorporated more pockets of level playing fields along with an assortment of new moves derived from Sonic's past.

If this preview is any indication, my prognosis for SA2 is that Sonic's swan song on Sega hardware will be as celebrated as his arrival for those who love him most, and for everyone else, well, it'll just be one more kick-ass Dreamcast game to throw on the pile. - Dave Halverson





CRAZY TAXI 2

Before the Dreamcast fades away, we have one more chance to earn some crazy money. New York City will never be the same.



The Dreamcast may be on its last legs, but before the year is out, Sega will have delivered more quality software for its final console than we really have any right to expect. Leading the charge is Crazy Taxi 2, the sequel to one of my all-time favorite alternative driving games.

This time around, the mad shenanigans take place in the crowded city streets of the Big Apple, and the original cabbies have been replaced by four newcomers: Hot-D, Iceman, Slash, and Cinnamon. Aside from the addition of a new crazy hop, gameplay has remained largely unchanged. As in the original, it's your job to pick up customers and deliver them to their target destinations with tips awarded for performing various "crazy" stunts along the way. To up the ante a bit, Hitmaker has added the ability to pick up groups of two to four people at once, which multiplies the dollar amount

of your tip accordingly. The more money you can rack up in the given time limit, the better the grade you'll receive. This gives the game an addictive quality reminiscent of *NiGHTS*, oddly enough, as earning superior letter grades soon becomes an obsession.

For the most part, Crazy Taxi 2 seems to be more of the same, but I don't think fans will mind terribly much. In fact, they're more likely to bemoan the game's most significant addition, the crazy hop, because it oftentimes eliminates the need to skillfully weave in and out of traffic. The old adage "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" certainly pertains here, but one can't blame the developers for trying to bring a new dynamic to the game. Perhaps its merit will become more apparent with time.

-Steve Thomason



BLOODY ROAR 3

The mighty morphing beasts of Bloody Roar make the jump to PlayStation 2, and their ferocious brand of fighting looks better and hits harder than ever before



Want a different kind of one-on-one fighter on PS2 to sink your teeth into? Then look no further than Bloody Roar 3, the latest and greatest installment of Hudson's feral 3D fighting series.

Like before, Bloody Roar's stand-out feature is the ability to morph into fierce beastly forms, which opens up new attacks and makes it possible to thoroughly tear the opposition to shreds in a flurry of teeth and claws. Naturally, making good use of the "beastorization" powers is key to success. You can use your beast power to transform and then unleash a super-strong super combo, or you can wait until your beast power is maxed out and use the new super-beastorization mode. This super-powerful form lasts for a limited time, during which your character literally radiates with power, but watch out, because afterward you'll revert to human form and won't be able to transform for the remainder of the battle.

The character lineup in BR3 is wickedly cool. Though essentially the same as BR2, the characters never looked so good -- particularly the voluptuous Jenny the bat. The main new addition is Xion the unborn, an absolutely awesome cybernetic insect-creature bristling with tendrils and energy blades that's would make McFarlane weep, but a few hidden fighters are also included.

As you'd expect with a game making the jump from PS1 to PS2, the biggest enhancement is in the visuals department. The fighters in BR3 are up there with the best the PS2 has to offer, with excellent models and painstakingly detailed textures -- the lifelike spots on Marvel the leopard's fur being a prime example. Little animation touches are everywhere, including blinking eyes, twitching whiskers, and bouncy action that's right up there with DOA2. One arena set in a frigid store room even features particles that kick up off the floor during fights and steam that comes out of characters' mouths as they breathe.

With its mix of new features, enhanced visuals and intense battling action -- and of course, its unique twist on the fighting genre -- Bloody Roar 3 will definitely be worth looking into when it hits the U.S. this summer. - **Chris Hoffman**



EXTERMINATION

Sony and Deep Space try their hand at survival horror, and while the end result may not be original, it works

Whoever said that a game has to be original to be any good? One certainly would not have heard me uttering such thoughts as I played Sony's new action-horror game, *Extermination*. A fantastically engaging pastiche of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Resident Evil*, *Tomb Raider*, and the better parts of *Blue Stinger*, here's a game without a single original bone in its body, and it's completely unapologetic about it.

For instance, here's the set up. At a top-secret military installation in the Antarctic, a deadly virus has broken out, one that transforms organic and inorganic matter into ghastly mutated forms. As Dennis Riley, member of top-rate U.S. Marine recon force, it's your job to infiltrate the base and figure out what the blazes is going on, and more importantly, to blast the hell out of anything creeping and crawling about.



Sounds familiar, yes? So be it. Everything crafted around this rote scenario is done supremely well.

The first thing developers Deep Space got right was the character animation. Whether running, leaping, or climbing around the environments *Tomb Raider*-style, your well-modeled character moves through the world with a satisfying grace and fluidity. The control is good, natural and easy to grasp, with a fast and accurate lock-on system and first person view.

Also accomplished are the game's cold, industrial-theme environments, which become increasingly infected and infested as the story and play unfold. There is the odd moment of resolution dropping in some of the more open and vast areas, but overall, the look of *Extermination* is first rate, alternating successfully between snowy outdoor scenes, gargantuan complexes, and tight and claustrophobic dark corridors. These especially highlight one of the more clever graphical touches of the game, which is a gun-mounted flash light that throws a convincing spotlight effect that wraps and warps itself around the various contours of the environments.

As far as creature design goes, *Extermination* follows the tried and true model of *Thing*-like mutants that the Japanese, for whatever reason, seem to love to do. Think *Blue Stinger*, *D2*, *Berserk*, *Parasite Eve 2*...you get the idea. Even so, the designs here are effective, with creatures off all shapes and sizes lurking about, begging to have their suffering ended, which, of course, is an activity one is only too happy to oblige in.

This preview is based on a quick play-through of the Japanese version, and a subsequent early U.S. build has highlighted some changes, the most interesting of which is that the lead, Dennis Riley, has been slightly remodeled, sporting longer hair and a lighter colored outfit in the U.S. version. This change is reflected in the screenshots. As for the U.S. voice acting, the jury is still out, but no matter how this element ends up, a supremely solid action-horror game is on its way this summer.

- Mike Hobbs

LEGACY OF KAIN: BLOOD OMEN 2

While Raziel's out for Kain's head in *Soul Reaver 2*, Kain's out for flesh and blood in yet another tale set in the Nosgoth universe

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain was released six long years ago on the PlayStation. Its inspiration was the immortal legend of the vampire, a creature that is forever damned to live in darkness and sustain life through human blood -- the perfect video game character. In *Legacy of Kain*, a human named Kain became one of these pitiful creatures after he was slaughtered, forced to seek vengeance on the cult that sent him into his waking hell. His journey was so richly compelling that its creators, Crystal Dynamics, took the logical and wise next step of forging the sequel, *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*, an equally gripping journey through an underworld of darkness and despair. This time, Kain was the head sicko, and a banished soul named Raziel became the protagonist pining for Kain's undead head. *Soul Reaver* kicked ass, and as so many kick ass games tend to do, spawned another sequel, which is still gesticulating in PlayStation 2 workstations, ready to bloom in a few months as *Soul Reaver 2*. Somewhere in this deliciously twisted mix, the idea for *Blood Omen 2* crawled into Crystal Dynamic's fertile minds, so during this holiday season, mirth and cheer and goodwill will wither in the presence of the return of Kain.

Confused? don't be. It's simple, really: two potentially killer games are coming out this year on PlayStation 2, one starring Kain, a vampire with a penchant for messy slay-



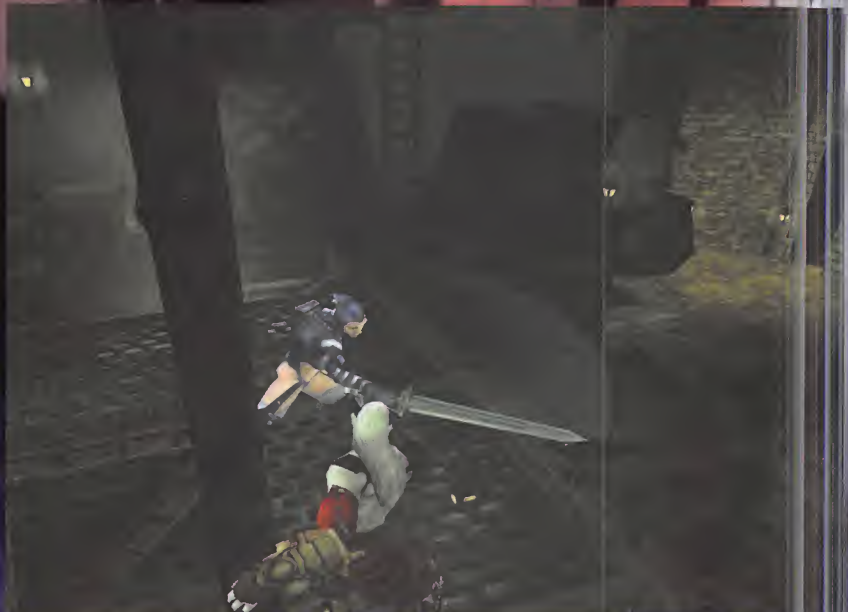
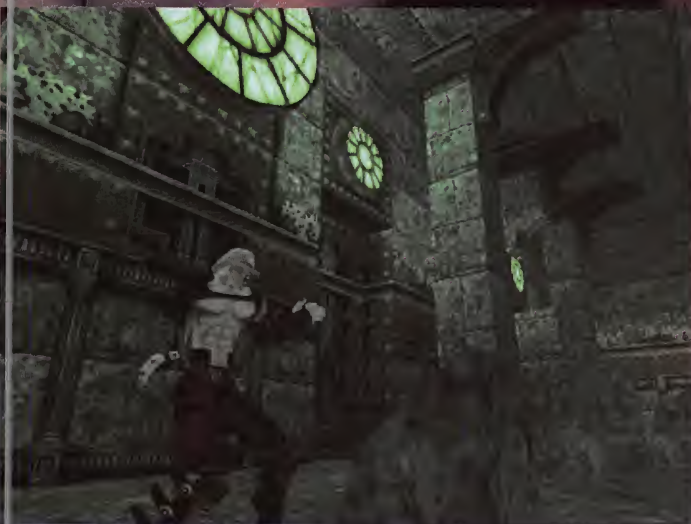
ings, and one starring Raziel, a former vampire humiliated by his elder, Kain, and sent to the underworld where he vows to suck souls and kill Kain.

Much has changed since the original *Legacy of Kain* spilled its doom and gloom over PlayStation gamers five years ago. Polygons have replaced antiquated sprites, building an even more convincing space of dread in which Kain carries out his vengeance over the vulnerable inhabitants of Nosgoth. The nasty load times that halted the experience in *Legacy of Kain* have also been left in the past, thanks to sound programming that maintains a continual flow of action through the entire game.

The setting of *Blood Omen 2* moves away from the first game's more organic, primitive backdrops of woods and caves and into a more

lively, densely structured city region. Kain still wields a giant sword, and he'll pick up other weapons discarded by victims or laying around the city and in the dungeons -- all perfect instruments for such techniques as evisceration and decapitations.

As a purveyor of the art of the occult, Kain is also handy with spell casting and magic powers, which he picks up from victories over other vampires. An intelligent and sly vampire, Kain can practice restraint in his pursuit, hiding in the shadows for stealth attacks; you'll particularly enjoy sneaking up to an unsuspecting guard and thrusting Kain's sword into the base of the victim's neck. Will you not be entertained? - GR



TWISTED METAL: BLACK

Automotive carnage debuts on PS2 with the series that started it all



After four appearances on the original PlayStation, the Twisted Metal series was really getting stale. The last two games in particular failed to bring anything new or exciting to the table and the franchise seemed doomed to languish in mediocrity. But new hardware is just what the doctor ordered for Sony's floundering vehicular combat series. For despite lacking any monumental innovations, Twisted Metal: Black is enjoyable thanks to its stunning graphics and a number of subtle yet significant gameplay additions made possible by the PlayStation 2's processing power. Moreover, the original developers have returned, and given the game a dark, gritty atmosphere far more engaging than part four's over-the-top silliness. The word "black" is definitely in the title for good reason.

Aside from the aforementioned visual quality, the PS2 also affords some truly gargantuan environments. These levels are larger in scope than anything we've seen in the genre and almost everything contained within them is interactive in some way. This gives the game an element of exploration and strategy only hinted at in previous versions. The characters and their stories have been similarly elaborated upon, adding some much-needed depth to the single-player mode.

The final enhancement I'll mention in this preview is that vehicles actually transform slightly when changing weapons (and Sweet Tooth's special is a full-fledged transformation into a Decepticon-esque robot). Although TM:B's core gameplay remains familiar, little things like this go a long way in making it feel like a fresh experience. Such is crucial for the game to finally retake the genre, which the series itself started over five years ago. - Steve Thomason

FINAL FANTASY X

One of the longest running video-game series demonstrates its fierce popularity in this visually captivating adventure



Here we are, yet again, breathlessly awaiting the next installment in the indomitable Final Fantasy series. Speculate all you want about story and gameplay and extras and battles and all the stuff that has already been commented on but really has offered no concrete existence. Watching a game on video reveals one certainty: Final Fantasy X is a towering achievement in visuals sophistication. Marvel at the progress Square has made over the years.



R.E. CODE: VERONICA X

Just like the Dreamcast version, only better, because it comes with the Devil May Cry demo

For those of you who don't understand why so many of us can't get enough of the zombie apocalypse, pretend just this once that you really love Resident Evil and Code: Veronica X must be a part of your otherwise incomplete collection, because with it you get the wickedly amazing Devil May Cry demo. For those of you who've played Code: Veronica on Dreamcast and can't possibly justify adding the same game to your collection, pretend like there is more added value to the game than an additional ten minutes of CG video and a more fleshed-out look at the enigmatic Wesker.

Everyone else should play Resident Evil Code: Veronica X for many reasons:

- (a) It's essentially Resident Evil 4, the most ambitious and entertaining game yet in one of the most accomplished series in video games.
- (b) Zombies are frightening creations, and when packs of them lumber around, hungering to munch on your flesh, the effect is gloriously creepy.
- (c) Everyone likes a game that is a technical



wonder, and Code: Veronica X, despite indistinguishable change from the older Dreamcast original, is packed with detail, dynamic lighting, and magnificent designs.

(d) If it's horror you're after, only Silent Hill can compete with the thrills and chills of the Resident Evil series.

(e) The CG cutscenes are masterfully rendered, pumping added life into the mood and story.

(f) Your heart cries out to find the answers to why Clair Redfield, imprisoned on an island research facility while searching for her kidnapped brother, is finding so many zombies and dead bodies and mass destruction.

(g) As the master of unlocking, you will unlock some really cool puzzles, most of which make sense within the context of the game.

(h) Any game that depicts a scene where androgenous twins are playing in the

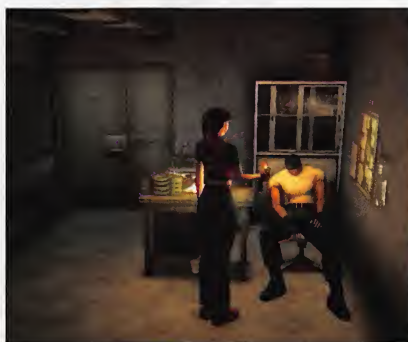
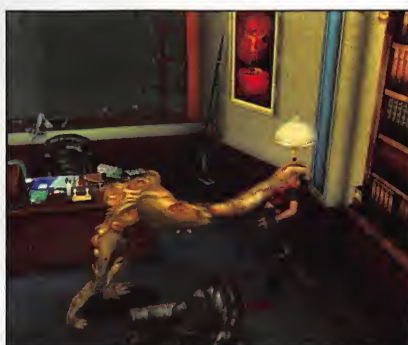


den of a gorgeously constructed mansion, gleefully ripping the wings off a dragon fly and feeding it to ants, is inspired horror.

(i) Large, genetically mutilated beasts with elastic appendages used for quick transport across a room join the zombies for endless heart-pounding confrontations.

(j) Devil May Cry is included.

- GR



SMUGGLER'S RUN 2: HOSTILE TERRITORY

Angel Studios builds on their awesome launch title. SM2's more of what you love, plus stuff you never thought you'd get



Smuggler's Run was one of the better PS2 launch titles and Angel Studios is speedily preparing its sequel for release this October. It's been a mere twelve months since the original's debut, and players will again have the opportunity to travel anywhere within the game's vast environments, attempting to avoid the law and rival gangs while delivering various forms of contraband to its new owners. This time around, however, the action takes place in Afghanistan and Vietnam, and the locales are littered with such hazards as crossfire, minefields, and avalanches. Even the cargo itself can become a hindrance, as certain goods may slow you down, some may bounce and break, and anything with a biohazard label on it will explode when the timer expires. Needless to say, the smuggling profession has become a whole lot more dangerous.

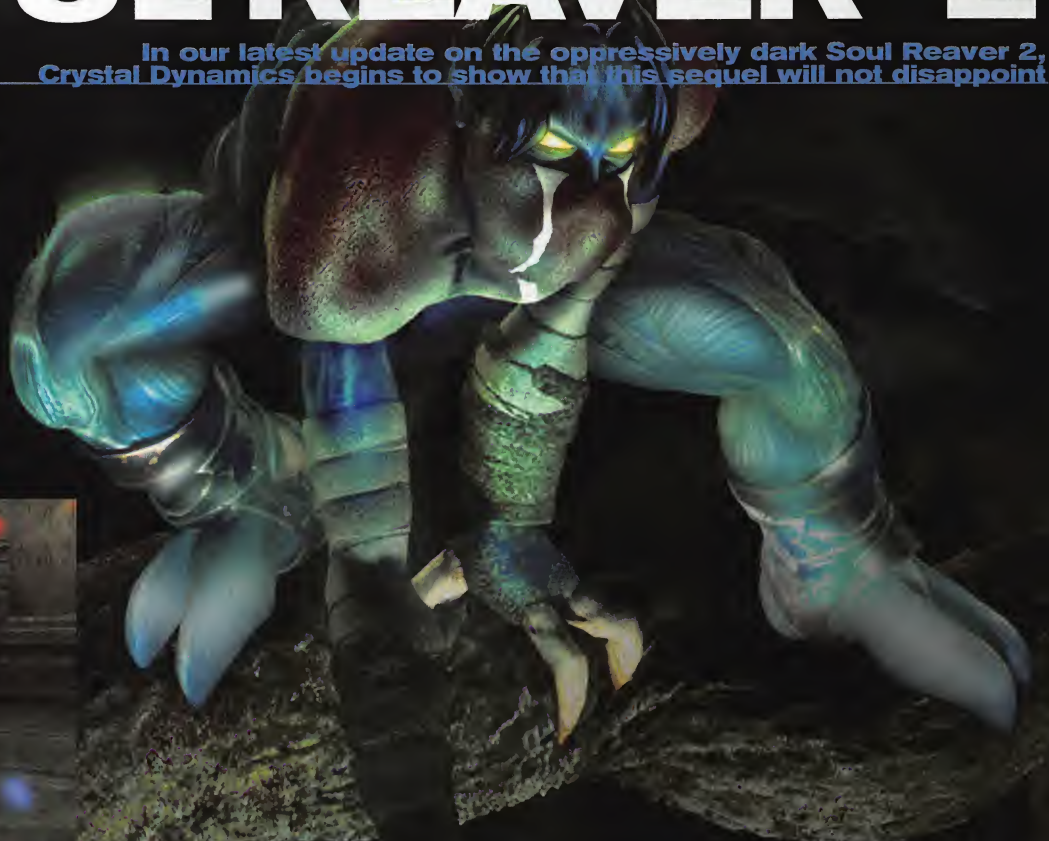
In addition to promising over 30 mis-

sions, enhanced enemy AI and varying weather conditions (including rain, snow, fog, and sandstorms), the developers are also committing to a fully immersive storyline with FMV cut scenes that integrate gameplay goals with a detailed, cohesive plot. New rides will also be introduced, including quad bikes and tank-like military vehicles. And what sequel would be complete without the requisite audio-visual enhancements? A licensed soundtrack is being put together (no specific artists have been announced yet) and the graphics are being improved with a focus on dynamic reflection mapping and high-resolution smoke and particle effects. All in all, Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory seems to possess the necessary ingredients of a worthwhile follow-up. - **Steve Thomason**



SOUL REAVER 2

In our latest update on the oppressively dark Soul Reaver 2, Crystal Dynamics begins to show that this sequel will not disappoint



It looks like Soul Reaver 2 is like its predecessor in more ways than one: development time is taking much longer than first anticipated. No matter. This oppressively dark sequel deserves all the time it needs to reach a proper release; we fans can't take another dubious cliffhanger like the last time.

But let's forget that past and focus on the present: Soul Reaver 2 is more than a straightforward action-adventure with a shadowy theme. Following the path forged by the original Kain and its sequel, Soul Reaver 2 is tapping into dense story elements and loads of voice acting - some of the best in the industry. Puzzles balance the action -- spell-casting and mystically juiced sword-slashing -- developing progression through the world in a more logical, less perfunctory manner. Be patient; it'll be worth the wait. - GR



HERDY GERDY

What is a gamer to do when his game has no guns or ceaseless explosions or scenes of mass destruction?



During last year's E3, Eidos was gracious enough to escort us behind closed doors to take a peak at Miss Croft's latest adventure in Tomb Raider 5. But before teasing us with that brief PlayStation 2 demo, the fun began with a look at the ambitiously unique Herdy Gerdy. Our eyes lit up, and we were certain that something special was in the works. Sworn to secrecy with threats that any early mention of the game would result in another sequel to Fighting Force, we could only sit on our newfound information until Herdy Gerdy was in a more digestible form. So here we are, a year later, finally looking at the next phase of the Herdy Gerdy development cycle, and it would seem that, at least from a visual perspective, Herdy Gerdy is everything we knew it would be: something special.

What a gorgeous game this is! Bearing a beautiful pastoral aesthetic bathed in a surreal, fairy-tale fantasy, Herdy Gerdy is a delight to look at. Feeding warmth and a naturalistic tone into the wonderful art style, the lighting carves out shadows and depth and space that enhance the level of immersion. Here is a game that finally lends credence to the early PlayStation 2 promises.

The creatures encountered in Herdy Gerdy are wonderfully appealing, but the limited shots on this page only hint at the copious amounts of life that inhabits the game's world: more than 200 characters are being created, 12 of which are at the center of the story, offering complex interaction.

At that first E3 presentation, one of the first questions asked was, "What kind of weapons does Gerdy use? What kind of attacks does he have?" The typically banal question

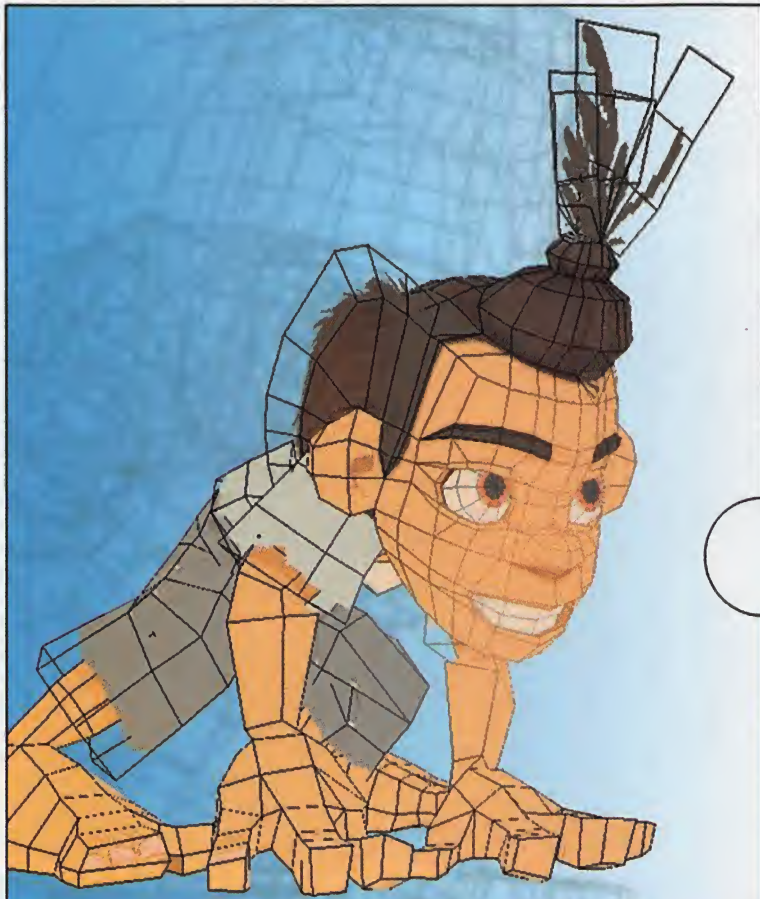


was met with an atypically inspired answer, "Gerdy doesn't attack, he herds. His main objective is to herd wild creatures to safety."

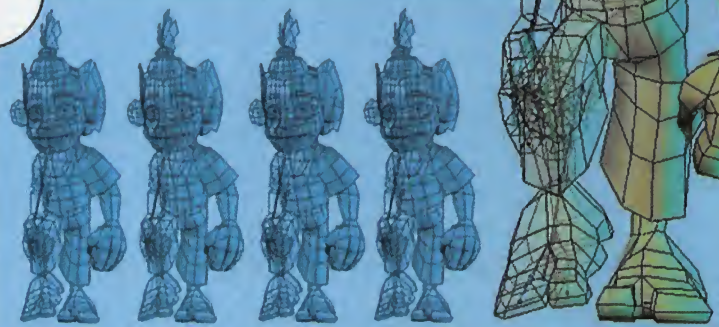
So this means Herdy Gerdy might actually offer something fesh and new in addition to the traditional platform adventure gameplay? From what we've seen so far, the answer is "absolutely." - **GR**



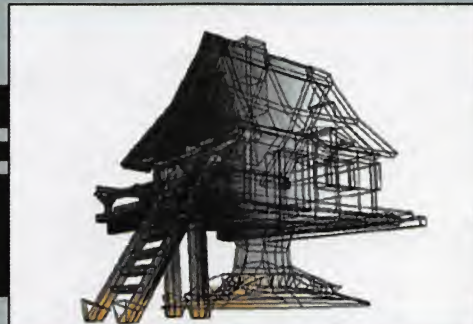
During an editor gathering to take a brief look at the game last month, one of the most common descriptions of Herdy Gerdy was: "It looks like a live cartoon." Indeed, the game takes on a rich quality that a game of its type has never achieved. And while we really can't go much into detail yet on the gameplay, this game will never be accused of lacking inspiration. Yes, you'll find familiar run-and-jump scenarios, but more than a few unique surprises await.



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DEVIL MAY CRY

Grand visual artistry and sophistication combine with kinetic action to create a wickedly inspired adventure





First there was Metal Gear Solid 2, the Best Looking Game Ever, and early qualifier for Best Game Ever. The game reached an actual playable existence, and it was decided that nothing would reach its visual greatness for years. Then came Final Fantasy X, the new Best Looking Game Ever with the Best Looking CG Ever, surely to also be in the running for Best Game Ever honors. The next PlayStation 2 game on the Best Looking Game Ever list is Devil May Cry, a visual miracle existing next to everything that has come before it.

Devil May Cry is a fascination for anyone in love with art. It creates an existence, a gothic space of elegance and looming beauty. There is a completely new form and structure to its grand designs, an architectural sprawl that has before only come alive in movies, books and paintings. Capcom has been liberated by the PlayStation 2, constructing foyers, halls and corridors so rich and robust that you will find yourself lost in the convincing realism.

Or maybe the intoxication is in the lack of realism, the atmosphere and

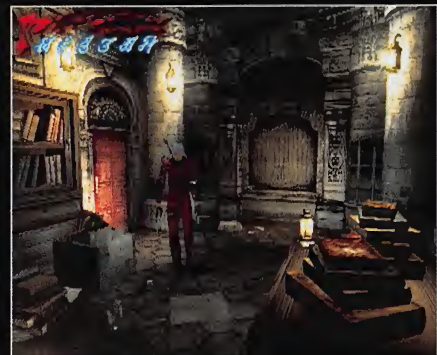
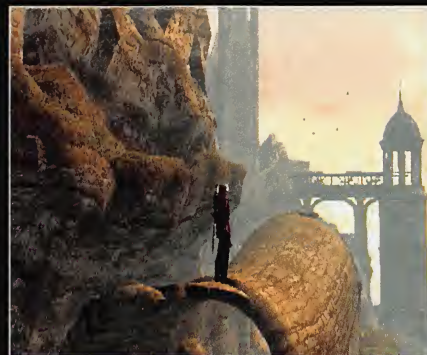
energy that could only come from visual strokes of fantasy. And the detail is extraordinary. The game is currently only a 30-minute teaser, but how can you not recognize its feats of magnificent artistry? Those with a hunger for the macabre will be further given over to the game's sights and sounds, delighted by the imaginatively creepy character designs: tattered ghosts attack with giant sheers, demonic marionettes lift their limp, wonderfully animated forms with hanging strings.

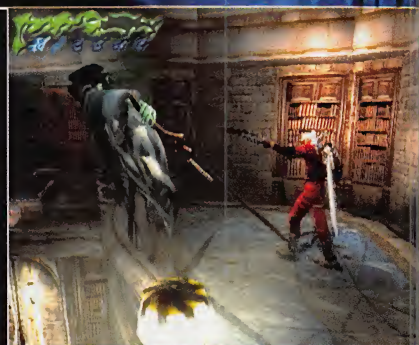
Directed by Mr. Hideki, whose Resident Evil 2 served as an obvious inspiration for the pervasive gloom and doom, Devil May Cry hinges ceaseless action on its extraordinary visuals. A smoothly implemented targeting system allows you to efficiently swing a huge sword and blast away with an assortment of weapons, cutting down the enemy for its discarded spirit energy, which feeds a demon form and releases locked doors.

Devil May Cry is early proof that the possibilities of video games are forever changing. A game like this should be an inspiration for gamemakers. It must also be incredibly humbling.



Look closely, and you'll notice rounded edges and curved surfaces that create a new sense of space and atmosphere.







ALONE IN THE DARK

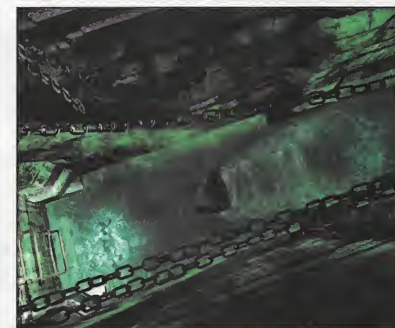
A new nightmare begins as the grandfather of survival horror returns. Play with the lights out at your own risk.

Alone in the Dark may be the originator of the survival horror genre, but the latest installment in the series borrows a few things from its contemporaries. The control scheme is nearly identical to that of Resident Evil, while the supernatural atmosphere reminds me of Silent Hill. These are, of course, both excellent titles and Darkworks is wise to take note of them because Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare is shaping up to be a stellar game in its own right.

The adventure begins with some truly impressive CG animation that details how and why Edward Carnby and Aline Cedrac are traveling to Shadow Island. Upon landing on the mysterious isle, you must choose which character to play as. Although their paths cross throughout the game (so neither is really alone in the dark), each experiences the story in a slightly different manner. This makes playing through it a second time a unique and worthwhile undertaking.



Although the PlayStation is showing its age these days, Alone in the Dark also sports some praiseworthy visuals. The pre-rendered backgrounds are intricately detailed and the way your flashlight illuminates them is unlike anything I've ever seen. This adds immeasurably to the atmosphere of the game, as you never know what might be revealed in that shadowed corner or caliginous hallway. Also possessing some believable voice acting, an eerie soundtrack, and an intriguing story, Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare could provide us with our last great PlayStation



adventure. — **Steve Thomason**

WHO WOULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT A SIMPLE FLASHLIGHT COULD ADD SO MUCH TO A GAME'S ATMOSPHERE? MANY OF ALONE IN THE DARK'S MORE TENSE MOMENTS COME WHEN USING THIS TOOL TO ILLUMINATE SHADOWY AREAS. IT WOULD BEHOVE YOU TO HAVE AN EXTRA PAIR OF TROUSERS HANDY.



METAL GEAR SOLID 2

Sons of Liberty

Nearly a year after its rousing debut at E3, Hideo Kojima's amazingly ambitious sequel is finally playable



It's only a short demo—five minutes if you take the path of least resistance to the bridge of the ship. But this is the first time you've seen anything like this sequel to one of your favorite games on PlayStation. It demands that you explore every room, find every item, perfect the controls, soak in the powerful atmosphere and amazing visuals. Five minutes invariably turns into two hours of the most fastidious, obsessive scrutinizing of a game you've ever done.

The captivation begins during the opening cutscene. Solid Snake, cloaked in a full-length rain coat, walks the George Washington Bridge, soaked by a raging rain storm. Brilliant streams of light from oncoming traffic pierce the darkness.

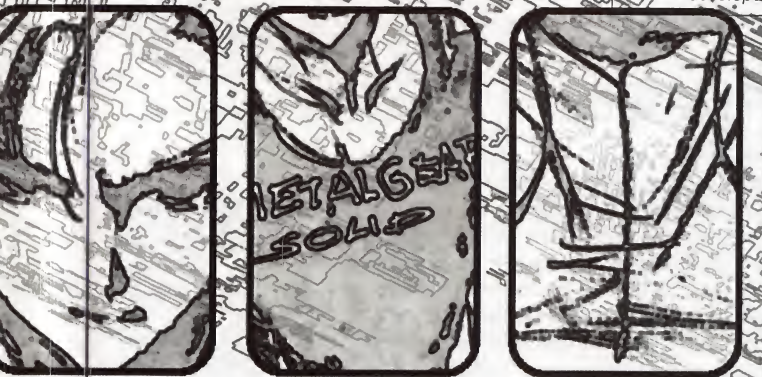
Solid Snake tosses his coat into the wind, disappears into an environment-reflecting stealth suit, runs to the edge of the bridge, and, bungee attached, swan dives gracefully toward the dark waters below. Harry Gregson-William's fully orchestrated score weaves in vocal inflections that work with the images to crawl under your skin. You are grateful that the game's director has the sense—and the budget—to utilize a Hollywood composer to bring added strength to the already compelling visual presence.

That director is Hideo Kojima, the creator of the original Metal Gear, and you get the immediate sense that a master craftsman is at work again. The scene is skillfully staged, directed with top-tier Hollywood sensibility.

Credits continue to form on the screen: military advisor Motosada Mori. You wonder, What kind of game gives credit to a military advisor?

Solid Snake tumbles onto the deck of a U.S. Marine tanker, damaging his stealth suit; the effect depicting the decloaking is awesome. Snake looks skyward; the camera pans up to frame the title: Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty. You think to yourself, Oh my. But it's only





the intro, right? Kojima can't possibly sustain this level of detail and exciting immersion in a real-time setting?

Next comes the answer: yes, he can. It gets even better, because after Russians swarm the ship and murder the patrolling marines, dumping their bodies into the roiling ocean, you gain control of Solid Snake, and the feeling of movement in such a visually sophisticated space is initially overwhelming. You pause to take it all in—the pounding rain, the dense sound, the incredible reflections off the deck, the splashes from a running Solid Snake. Raindrops pound the screen. You move to the edge of the tanker and stare at the wind-swept waves, notice the sheets of water whipped off the top of the ship, the terrorists making a sweep on the upper decks, the beams of their flashlights struggling to penetrate the stormy night air—the tremendous realism of it all.

Otacon has debriefed you that a new Metal Gear is somewhere in the cargo hold of the ship. The com interface is instantly familiar, as is the radar, the control, the inventory management. You're ready to press forward. Moving up the stairs, a guard spots you, and the brilliantly implemented alarm sounds off, spiking you with a rush of adrenaline, so you leap over the rail, hang for a moment and jump down on a guard below who has come to aid his comrade. You can't believe all the detail, which has been gloriously revealed in a wide angle as Snake hangs on the second deck.

It's time to enter the ship. In the hall, water collects on the floor just inside the door, and a reflection captures the entire room. You track the water over the shiny floor, leaving dirty footprints. The effect is so entertaining that you begin running in circles, just to watch that ripple effect and leave multiple tracks.

A guard patrols the hall. You peek around the corner, back against the wall, and shoot a stun dart into his right leg. After a few seconds he falls limply to the ground, face first, his neck snapping back violently, imparting force and emotion through sensational animation. The guard's snoring; you can't leave him lying there, so you cradle him, drag him into the closest room, and stuff him in a locker. Searching through the other lockers you find ammunition, a 9mm, and a couple full-size pinups.

Deck A — Crew's Lounge, Starboard.

You nail the one guard, and he hits the stairs hard. More guards come in, blood splats cover the wall and floor, bullet casings scatter on the ground, and the enemy dumps empty clips after reaching back into their ammo pouch and pulling out fresh rounds. In the crossfire, the window separating the lounge area from the main hall gets shot: A tiny hole spreads outward in blooming strains of cracks, meets the edge of the glass and shatters. You run over the shards and hear a crackling sound. After the chaos settles down (this time you're forced to kill everyone), you enter the bar and shoot an ice bucket. You spend a few minutes just shooting the bucket, enjoying the effect of watching it dance on the bar. The ice melts. You spend some time shooting what bottles of liquor are left after the guards have done their damage. You are transfixed by the detail of it all, the wealth of visual touches that have been poured into every corner of the screen.

Aft Deck — Starboard.

The door is swung open, and Solid Snake's bandanna immediately shutters from the intense gust of wind. You intimidate a guard with your USP 9mm: he surrenders, throwing his hands up into the air. The next guard isn't so easy, forcing you to spinning heel kick him in the chest, which sends him crumpling over the railing; the impact shows an uncommon attention to space and physical presence within the environment. You admire the detail on his camouflage, the movement of the body as he breathes, the complexity of the silenced rifle strapped to his chest. Coming around the corner, you see the longest view of the ship—the multiple layers and latices, edges and corners and protrusions. Rows of lights send their glow crawling down the walls, radio towers reach up the ship, and beams and rails snake through the multiple tiers.



Back inside, another guard takes a nasty bullet to the back. His head hits hard on the wall. His face is planted into the wall, his back oddly contorted. Ouch. You can't believe the position he landed in, how the placement of the fall was accounted for. You peer outside through the water streaking down the windows, taking in so much structure and detail and complexity that you feel completely a part of a world, not merely a mazed sequence of walls through which to run and shoot.

Deck D — Crew's Quarters.

Next stop, the mess hall, where you enjoy running through the independently moving doors to the kitchen and intentionally alerting the guards so that you can watch the napkins get shredded in the shootout. After things calm down, you run back into the hall, avoiding a security camera by sliding cautiously against the wall. (An easier solution is to simply detonate a chafe grenade, which disables the camera.) To bypass an alarm sensor, a hint from Otacon reveals that shooting a fire extinguisher reveals the infrared beams. The liquid oxygen condenses into a sheet of ice on the floor.

In the pantry, enemy search parties are on the way. The force of the bullets sends one body spinning as it hits the floor. Clouds of flour from punctured sacks impair your vision. Bullets rip into the watermelon and cantaloupe, saturating the ground with chunks. Cardboard flaps vacillate from errant shots; everything in the room has collision. Underneath the shelf, the enemy tosses grenades. Condiments drip out from the shattered bottles. A grenade scatters potatoes over the ground, and you continue to shoot them with your stun darts; they spin like a top. After you clear the room, another round of guards comes in, but this time you hide under the supply storage racks. In first-person view, you notice that the restrictive space limits your guns movement, so you can only manage to stick a dart in each shin of the approaching guard. Down he goes, right in your face. You admire

the tread on his shoes.

Deck-E — The Bridge

A body hangs in the foreground; the level of tension is at critical, propelled by moody music. You move toward the window overlooking the deck and the port of the ship. An amazing reflection comes off the window, and you see the game's first boss, introduced dramatically as Olga Gurlukovich. A tight closeup frames her running through the flooded deck, demonstrating an extraordinary water effect. The camera closes in on Olga's face, and her eyes look like blue diamonds.

The battle begins. You track the the enemy as she hide behind pallets, darting in and out of view. A tarp flaps violently in the wind, and you find yourself staring at it instead of concentrating on the job at hand, which becomes a thrilling moment of masterfully presented gameplay. And then the demo is over, and you think to yourself, Kojima can't possibly sustain this level of detail and exciting immersion in a real-time setting for an entire game. - *Brady Fiechter*



the restrictive space limits your guns movement, so you can only manage to stick a dart in each shin of the approaching guard. Down he goes, right in your face. You admire

GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEWS

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GAME BOY COLOR

Toki Tori



GRAN TURISMO[®] 3

THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR

A-spec

GAME OF
THE MONTH

GRAN TURISMO 3 A-spec

developer: polyphony digital

publisher: scea

Racing games just don't get any better than this. Gran Turismo 3 is everything everyone hoped it would be; it's the best looking, best playing game of virtual racing home consoles have ever seen. Stunning graphics leapfrog the game past anything seen on PS2 yet, and the new, highly involving

physics model creates a bond between player and machine that is simply out of this world. So what if there are fewer cars than in Gran Turismo 2? One spin in this game, especially with the force-feedback wheel, will leave you breathless.



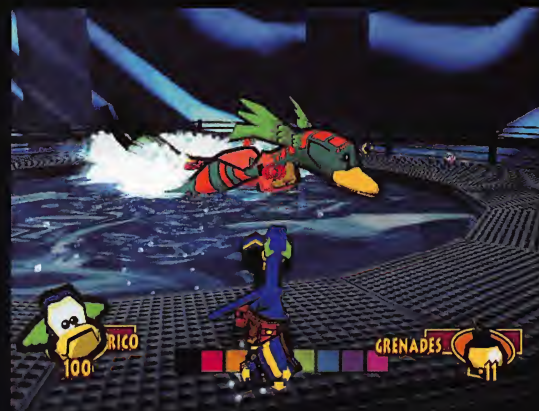
FUR FIGHTERS

Bizarre Creations' glorious action-adventure epic gets new life on the PlayStation 2

There's nothing more gratifying than seeing an underappreciated game get a second chance (so if anyone feels inclined to bring Super Magnetic Neo over to the PS2 after this, I'll help pay for it). Not only is Fur Fighters getting a new post-Dreamcast lease on life, but lucky PS2 owners are getting a much better version of the game. Bizarre Creations have re-textured the game using the increasingly popular cell technique seen in Jet Grind Radio, designed a new single-player level, and replaced all of the Fur Fighters' annoying grunts and groans with actual spoken dialogue. Besides these obvious enhancements, the game also benefits from being on the PS2 with a smoother frame rate, optional dual analog control, a new effects package (including insane reflections, shimmering H2O, and nice poofy smoke), and a better overall look and feel. And this was already one of the greatest action-adventure games ever devised.

In this massive adventure that spans well beyond 60 hours (not only is it one of the greatest, it's one of the longest too), you and your six new fuzzy friends (well, four are fuzzy) set out among a vast cartoon universe covering six (no, make that seven) massive worlds, in search of the Fur Fighters' accost-





ed kids. The evil Viggo and his minions of bumbling killer bears have hidden them all over the place to keep the Fur Fighters out of Viggo's fur while he gets on with taking over the world. The babies let you know when you're in their vicinity, so finding them is easy, but often, getting to them is not. Once you've cleared all five areas in each world, finding at least the minimum requirement of kids to move on, you'll take on a mutated Fur Fighter sibling (it gets ugly) until finally coming up against the man, er, make that the cat, himself, General Viggo. Along the way you'll be treated to more play mechanics than you've ever experienced in a single game, monstrous environments teeming with ingenuity -- from ultra clever puzzles to crazy devices to operate -- and scenarios that will make you want to buy stock in Bizarre Creations. Then, once you've vanquished Viggo and tucked in all the little Fur Fighters, you can play 15, four-player split-screen Fluffmatches and blow the stuffing out of each other. If you're a fan of fun, I implore you, buy this game. - **Dave Halverson**

★★★★★



KLONOA 2: LUNATEA'S VEIL

Namco has delivered exactly what fans of the first Klonoa wanted: more of the same in a beautiful wrapper



Call me old fashioned, but I have no desire to see 2D gameplay disappear any time soon. I suppose it's a generational thing; having been weaned on 2D, I have an obvious affinity for it. But as I reflected on its merits while enjoying Klonoa 2, it became clear to me that this affinity has little to do with nostalgia and a great deal to do with the simple fact that 2D play can be pleasurable in a way that generally escapes 3D games with complete environmental freedom. With its limited nature, good 2D gameplay brings to the fore more subjective and deeper pleasures, like perfected control, precise level design, and a joyfulness and ease of play afforded by the lack of struggling with a 3D camera or control system, which can hinder even the best 3D games.

Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil highlights the virtues of 2D with an almost aching beauty. As in the first game, you mostly run left or right, springboarding off of captured enemies, collecting gems, and fighting big bosses. But now, the levels unfurl and expand before Klonoa with an almost holographic depth that is completely breathtaking. Cannons fire Klonoa deep into the 3D worlds, and insane bounce pads shoot him seemingly thousands of feet into the air, where there's just the quiet rush of air blowing past as he falls to the surface, nabbing gems along the way. Yes, at its core Klonoa 2's brilliant mechanics are identical to the original game, but the psychological effect of seeing these vertiginous, sprawling, and beautiful worlds cannot be overstated; never has a pure





platformer been so visually gifted. Take just the second level as an example. Shifting between richly colored caves alive with three-dimensional pixie dust and massive outdoor areas where updrafts of wind carry Klonoa over great chasms, there is an undeniable vastness of space that is intoxicating. And because of the talent of Namco's artists, this vastness is brought to life with a color sense and design flair that enriches the experience immeasurably.

Indeed, everything about the game's presentation is superb. The various musical choices fits each of the many levels to perfection, and the numerous real-time cut scenes, which afford the best look at Namco's stunning cell shaded polygon technology, are delightful, especially as the brilliant nonsensical language of the first game has been retained.

And contrary to what I may have implied earlier, it must be made clear that Namco hasn't completely remade the first game. There are additions to the play in the form of some simple but very clever skill-based puzzles and, most noticeably, the new surfing stages. Coming in both 2D and 3D varieties, these thrilling dashes bring enough dynamic freshness to the formula to keep the experience suitably up to date. Still, there's no question that the bulk of Namco's creativity and inspiration took place during the development of the original, but this is a sequel after all, albeit one that has made a system leap.

And while in a slightly critical mood, I may as well mention a visual complaint, even if it's very minor and hardly affects my overall enjoyment of the game. In fact, let's call it more of an observation rather than a complaint. My observation is that there isn't a huge amount of polygonal complexity or texture detail evident in the backgrounds. Yes,

that great and inspiring depth is there, but shapes are simple and rounded edges scarce.

As one can see, I'm nitpicking, which invariably means I'm talking up something great. Klonoa 2 is pure magic, as pleasurable a platformer as I've played in a long time, and further proof that Namco can seemingly do no wrong. **-Mike Hobbs ★★★★★**



DARK CLOUD

Multi-faceted gameplay that actually works, along with visuals to die for. What's not to love?

Because a game is only as good as the sum of its parts, when a developer sets out to combine multiple genres, aiming for one grandiose experience, the end result is usually a mixed bag. Fortunately, Dark Cloud, the last game to hit the U.S. market after being in development since well before the Japanese PS2 launch, is an exception. Combining dungeon, creation, action, and role playing elements, Dark Cloud manages to captivate on every level, capturing the best of each in one 40-plus-hour campaign to save the people of two contrasting continents: the Eastern regions, driven by progress and technology, and the West, where people live in harmony with the spirits, content with the fruits of Mother Earth.

The adventure gets under way when the East's Colonel Flag, in all his Patton-meets-Fearless-Leader glory, decides to wage war on the West by unleashing a powerful demon genie. Granted, a demon genie is a bit freaky as a villain, but at least it's original. Simultaneously, as the Genie lays waste to the towns and villages, a powerful wizard snatches up and seals each region's inhabitants (and all they own) deep within adjacent dungeons. Following the near-massacre, he imbues the young Toan with the power to free the encapsulated spirits (and their stuff) as he ascends each massive dungeon, beating down indigenous mon-

sters. As Toan emerges to gather supplies, he must slowly rebuild each town and village from scratch. This is where the game reaps its most compelling attributes, fusing the dungeon and creation modes. While battling in the dungeons via a Zelda-esque lock-on battle engine, Toan finds fragments of each barren environment, from pieces of each dwelling to their occupants and belongings. As Toan completes each domicile, an event transpires where that resident will reward Toan by supplying him with clues and/or valuable items. They even go as far as telling Toan where they'd like to live relevant to landmarks and fellow villagers. As a result, knowing what you need to complete each place, the dungeons become about more than simply vanquishing foes. You can't wait to get outside and continue building your masterpiece--laying down roads, rivers, and trees and reassembling each residence. Getting the local store up and running is especially key, so you don't have to travel to buy and sell items. The towns and villages you build from a bird's-eye view through the magic of "georama" (I love when developers name this stuff; does anyone remember Diamond Vision?) become the real-time 60-fps environments that you ultimately play in. So you are essentially



building a large portion of the game as you play it. You can even switch to a first-person view as you enter each dwelling and admire the details such as area-specific decor, plates, goblets--you name it. Adding further to the pot, the level and ease of the item and weapon management borders on perfection. The assortment of available weapons you randomly find or buy are strengthened by attaching elements and gems akin to attributes like fire, ice, thunder, and wind. Once you upgrade a weapon five times, you can then perform a "status break" and fuse that weapon's status with a more powerful virgin weapon. The combination of weapons you can ultimately build is not only staggering but has a major impact on how the game plays out. As your party grows (and grow it does, to six playable characters), you must determine how vital each member is in relation to each area's monsters, and invest in growing that character accordingly. Besides helping conquer 15 floors of infested dungeon, building up the right ally is the difference between easily vanquishing the massive guardian that awaits you or becoming its lunch. Of the five allies that join Toan, I suggest paying extra attention to Ruby. The buxom witch is not only easy on the eyes but her long-range attack skills can be honed into a lethal stock of projectile magic.

Without going into detail, Dark Cloud's music, menu system, auto-mapping, and AI is honed to perfection. As is the control scheme and camera. And visually you'll find rich textures, scrolling skies, a diversity of beautifully modeled monsters, and fluid frame rates. As well, details like lighting and water all possess that shimmering PS2 luster.





Dark Cloud's only flaws, and they're minor, lie in the overly localized script and some early pacing issues. So after you witness a huge rock monster spew passe surfer slang, just do a quick rewrite in your head and move on; it's easy enough to get a feel for what the original Japanese was trying to say. As for the pacing, once you're close to completing the first village, it's all downhill. Dark Cloud is a first-rate game in every respect. For a first-generation offering, it far exceeds expectations, setting a new benchmark for dungeon and creation gaming. - **Dave Halverson** ★★★★★



ZONE of the Enders



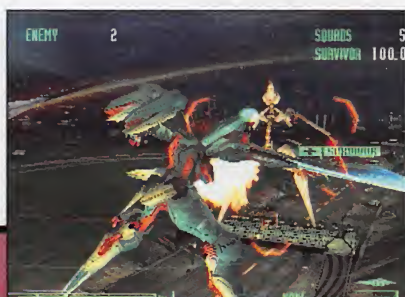
konami's first truly dazzling playstation 2 game may not be the classic that some were expecting. but brilliant gameplay and graphics go a long, long way

I have to admit to feeling a little bit conflicted about Zone of the Enders. On the one hand, here is one of the most instantly satisfying games I've ever played—a game where the control, play, and graphics exist in a state of almost hyper development, stimulating exactly the pleasure centers in the brain that a good action game should. But then on the other hand, these surface qualities are really all Z.O.E. has to offer. It is perhaps a negative function of my expectations that the game's lack of depth and substance stands out in such stark relief, but it does, and my conflict arises from having to reconcile personal expectations and objective criticisms.

I'll try to be as fair as possible in that regard, but first let's focus on where Zone of the Enders is brilliant, and one of these areas is its staggeringly well-designed gameplay. Close-range, energy sword combat and long-range shooting is all there is to it really, but the level of execution elevates these basic actions into an art form. Thank a perfect 3D combat camera and lock-on system, and the most maneuverable

mech ever attempted in a video game for part of the brilliance, but a lot of it also has to do with the animation and the undefinable subjective qualities of the well-crafted control. The game just feels good to play as you swoop and dash around your targets with an ease and grace that belies the sheer amount of processing that must be going on behind the scenes. And yes, the action in Z.O.E. is one note in nature, but it's as if that one note is being played by a 100-piece orchestra.

The game's other great accomplishment is its graphics, which are simply stunning. Certainly there is a slight sameness to some of the environments, and there isn't a huge amount of them, but the way they are detailed and drawn is truly inspired. Even more impressive is that so many of the structures in the game can be destroyed, even if this behavior is cleverly discouraged by the idea that some of the buildings are populated in certain missions. For most of the game, though, it's a building-destroying free-for-all, and there's nothing quite like grabbing

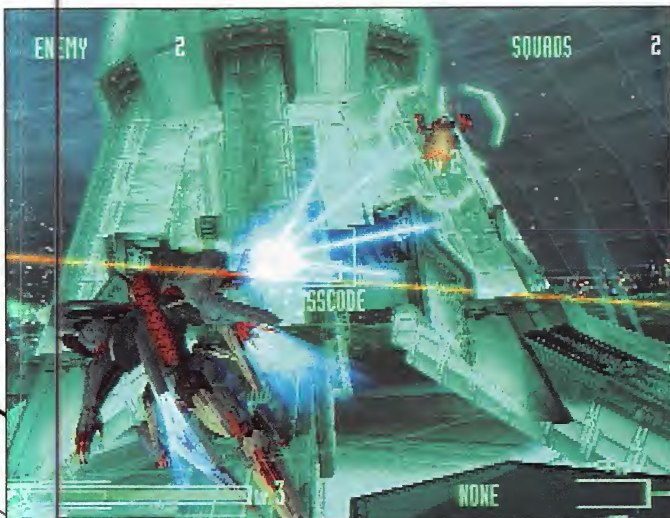


an enemy mech and throwing it into a building, laughing with delight as the structure explodes and crumbles to the ground with a great deal of polygonal pomp and circumstance. And the huge, multiform boss encounters, though there are too few of them, are deeply impressive as well.

So the game plays great and looks great, but what about the rest? Put plainly, the rest is just not as good by comparison. Though there are attempts to give some meaning to the gameplay, like the aforementioned populated buildings, and the idea of destroying certain enemies to acquire passcodes that allow you to use new weapons, it always boils down to destroying everything in sight. The same goes for the story, which is being pulled in two disparate directions, one led by the reluctant and slightly annoying hero, who doesn't want to destroy anything, and the other led by the fact that destroying everything is the name of the game. In that sense, the story is unsatisfying, and it doesn't help that the CG cutscenes are mostly unremarkable. And to complete the litany, there is a lack of variety in the enemies, the game structure is slightly inelegant, and there's no escaping the fact that the first ten minutes of the game are more or less the same as the last.

Considering the staff behind this game, I guess I expected a masterpiece from Zone of the Enders. I expected across-the-board perfection. This was unfair, but I think the game's problems ultimately are its own, separate from my expectations. And really, the faults are fairly minor compared with the achievements, and if there is any truth to the idea that a great action game need only get two things really right—gameplay and graphics—then Zone of the Enders is a dazzling manifestation of this truth. —Mike Hobbs

★★★★★



CREATING Z.O.E. AN INTERVIEW WITH

HIDEO KOJIMA
NORIAKI OKAMURA
YOJI SHINKAWA

[Hideo Kojima

(Producer)]

Gamers' Republic: You must be exhausted. How did you manage your time between *Metal Gear Solid 2* and *Z.O.E.*?

Hideo Kojima: I'm the producer of *Z.O.E.* I did not write the scenario or design the maps. I focused on checking what was being completed and supervising the promotion and development schedule. With *MGS2*, I write the scenario, design the game, edit footage, etc—all hands on. My company, KCE Japan (West), consists of more than 100 people working on *Z.O.E.*, *MGS2*, and music games. My role as manager and one running the company does comprise a big part of my job, and finding the time to develop games is not always easy.

GR: What was the impetus for the development of this game?

HK: The adoration and yearning for robots.

GR: Do *Z.O.E.* and *MGS2* share anything under the skin?

HK: Some team members worked on both games. The two games do not share tools or engines. The teams could have, but they preferred to use what they came up with by themselves. This internal sense of competition might have been one of the drives for the teams.

GR: What was the most troublesome aspect of the game's development?

HK: Achieving what we have achieved—the game system with easy and pleasant controls—was not an easy thing to do. And since I could not work on the designs myself (since I was the producer this time), I personally found it cumbersome trying to keep a distance and waiting until game elements were presented to me for my checking.

GR: You cut together the opening movie of *Z.O.E.* Was this simply a labor of love? It's really beautiful.

HK: First, my staff edited it. But then the world of *Z.O.E.* and the best scenes of the game were not well communicated in it. I started explaining verbally what I wanted. But then it was easier for me to do it myself rather than working on a storyboard or writing up a plan for it. This is something a producer should not have done.

GR: It has been reported that *MGS2* is to be the last *Metal Gear* game. Does this also mean the end of the *Solid Snake* character?

Konami: No comment.

Gamers' Republic: As the scenario creator and director of Z.O.E., you are responsible for the game's emotional content. Do you think it is easier or more difficult to create empathy for characters in a video game, as opposed to an animation or film?

Noriaki Okamura: As for creating empathy for characters, I think there is no better medium than games. You can tell a story and create empathy directly. Since the game industry has very little history, it has not become a self-established culture yet. But just like Manga and animations in Japan—and the movie industry 100 years ago—I strongly believe that the game industry will be recognized some day as one of the best storytelling mediums.

GR: In early interviews, the Z.O.E. team hinted that the aim of the game was to make it as close to a playable anime as possible. In that sense, Z.O.E.'s script would be just as important as solid action and gameplay. Do you feel that you have achieved that balance here?

NO: I think I was able to make Z.O.E. a playable animation. The easy controls of the robot—just like you see in a robot animation in which the boy controls the robot with only one stick—make this game a true robot animation simulator. You are the hero of this animation. And yes, the script is what makes this game a playable animation. You play the game, and the story progresses. You pay attention to the story, and the game progresses. Both elements are really intertwined. Of course, there are things I could not include this time. I'll try to include them in my next project, whatever it may be.

GR: Everyone who plays Z.O.E. is absolutely stunned by the ability of the 3D camera to not only focus on the action, but also present it in a way that keeps the game completely playable. How difficult was this to achieve?

NO: We spent so much time working on the camera it is unbelievable. But this camera system is what makes this game so easy to play while retaining the speed you expect in a robot animation.

GR: If all good game design is a series of compromises, how did that shape the design of Z.O.E. as development progressed? What had to be sacrificed to

achieve your core vision of the game?

NO: It is not easy to say what compromises we made. I'd rather have the players enjoy the final product rather than look back and talk about what did not happen. But yes, there were many changes we had to make during the development process until we finally completed Z.O.E.

GR: The idea of civilian casualties is an interesting one, as this aspect is often overlooked in the exaggerated world of video games. Was this your idea?

NO: Yes. The dilemma of a hero is what I wanted to express in the game. Your HP is almost zero. You can fly to Town 1 to obtain a recovery item. But there are people crying for help in Town 2. If you go to Town 2, you can save the people, but you could be killed in the process. If you go to Town 1, you will not get killed. But people are going to be killed in Town

2. And even if you do save the people in Town 2, they are not going to thank you. But you save them because you are a hero. It is this dilemma I want the players to experience.

GR: The rendered cinemas, in terms of detail, look almost as if they could have been achieved in real time. Why weren't they?

NO: What I did in Z.O.E. was to do things in real time when it was easier and quicker. If it was easier to do something with rendered graphics, I had them done with rendered graphics. My aim was not trying to do everything in real time.

GR: What single element are you most proud of?

NO: The easy and exhilarating gameplay and feel. I seriously believe that is the foundation of all of Z.O.E.

[Yoji Shinkawa

[Mechanical Designer]

Gamers' Republic: The mechs in Z.O.E. have such beautiful silhouettes, with fantastic tension in their forms. Were these particular goals when you set out to create the mech designs?

Yoji Shinkawa: The cockpit located in the groin, the skate-like landing gear appearing when landing on a flat surface, and inspirations from Egyptian mythology—all these go back to my school-day sketches. When finalizing the designs, I took into consideration the reactions of the model in the game when the player controlled it and the overall design to match everything else in the game. For example, the nozzles on the back that correspond in motion to the speed and direction, the blood vessel-like lines and their colors expressing how much HP is left, the green lights on the shoulders leaving light traces, the arms stretching when slashing the enemy, the chest plate sliding then the shoulders move, etc. etc. Even flying around and skating on surfaces without any fighting is very enjoyable.

GR: Z.O.E. is more futuristic than Metal Gear Solid. How did this change your approach to the mechanical design on the game?

YS: When designing mechs for MGS, I made sure the mechs looked like military weapons. I could not go beyond those boundaries. With the Z.O.E. mechs, I could do whatever I wanted to. Working under limitations and without them are both very interesting.

GR: Are you involved in the way your designs are interpreted in polygonal form?

YS: Yes. I look at the polygon models and make comments on them. Then the models are modified and I look at them again.

GR: Do you count legendary mechanical designer Syd Mead among your influences?

YS: I like Syd Mead, and I've also been impressed by the thoughts of Luigi Colani. And, of course, I've been influenced by Japanese robot animations.





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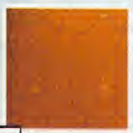


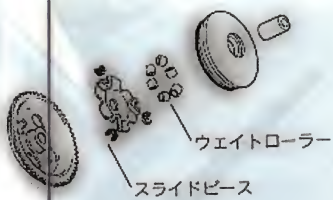
A - spec

The wait is finally over for Polyphony's magnum opus, and the end result is nothing short of the finest driving experience of all time



Welcome to the delectable world of Gran Turismo 3, the most anticipated PlayStation 2 game this side of Final Fantasy X. All I can offer is that the seemingly interminable wait has been worth it, as the magicians at Polyphony Digital have obviously poured their hearts and souls into this game.

[illegible]



• developer polyphony • publisher sony • available july playstation 2 review

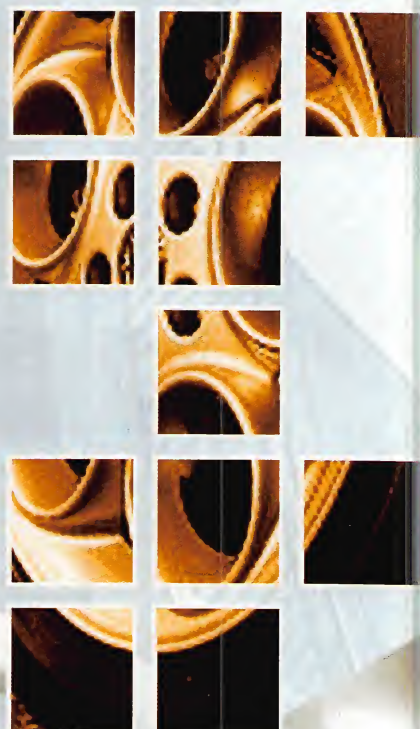


The quality and beauty evident here is almost impossible to encapsulate, so prodigious are this game's talents. I suppose it's easiest to start with Gran Turismo 3's graphics, and my knee-jerk vocabulary seems trite to me here; words like *stunning* and *unprecedented* just won't do. No, this game's visual impact is best described in physical terms, as in the way it will make you fall out of your seat. Most of this is to do with the more subtle effects applied throughout, like the eerily realistic way the sun glints off the asphalt, or in the way candy-stripe kerbing can be seen reflected in the cars' meticulously, gorgeously modeled surfaces. And then there is the amazing visual density of the

courses. You don't feel like you're racing through a strip of road with some scenery sprinkled around; you feel like you're racing through a complete world, and there's this amazing sense of going from place to place within the environment. The sheer visual variety is astounding. And this is just describing the normal sunlit environments. Throw amazing-looking wet and night races into the mix, along with the cracking dirt tracking through the rally races and you've got the most visually complete racing experience ever attempted. If it weren't for some

"The quality and beauty evident here is almost impossible to encapsulate..."





very, very minor and very, very rare periphery pop up, I would have no visual complaints whatsoever.

Now before I get the game's dynamic delights, I have to preface this with the caveat that I have been playing Gran Turismo 3 exclusively with Logitech's perfected force-feedback wheel. Normally, I loathe playing racing games with wheels, as they often prove more trouble than they're worth. But with the brilliant force-feedback coding that Polyphony Digital has applied, racing with the GT Force wheel elevates the experi-

ence of Gran Turismo 3 into a truly rarefied realm. In concert with the deeply involving physics model, the wheel actually lets you feel the road surface and various loadings of your car's tires. You'll marvel at the feeling of the steering growing heavy as your car scrubs off speed through a corner, or of it lightening as you countersteer through a slide. Going over kerbs imparts a violent thumping, and racing around rally courses is like an explosion of sensation as the wheel jerks back and forth in your hands. This is truly the only way to play. With the stock Dual Shock

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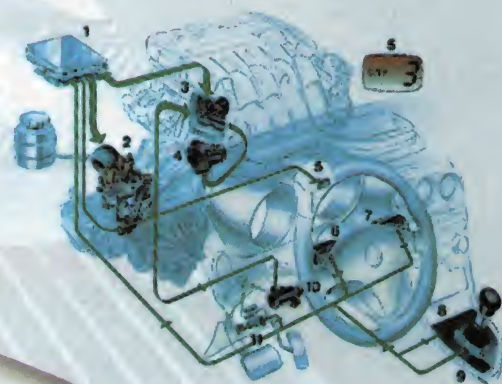
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pad, the game is still brilliant, but the physical experience is really no different than previous incarnations of Gran Turismo, even if the physics modeling has been much improved.

The remainder of Gran Turismo 3's pleasures pretty much go without saying. The sound is perfect, spine-tingling even, and as any GT purist will tell you, this is a game best enjoyed with the music switched off. There's a terrific, if smaller, selection of cars -- with some, like Mazda's RX-8 and Nissan's new Z, not even on the roads yet -- a wonderful variety of courses, and a staggering amount of racing challenges. And of course, once you fall in love with just one car that suits your dri-

ving style, the long term play value and satisfaction is enormous, especially if you have the resources to link six PS2's for full screen multiplayer competition.

I had impossibly high expectations for this game, and the fact that it has exceeded them speaks to the amount of hard work and sleepless nights that must have gone into the creation of GT3. For what it's worth to the men and women at Polyphony Digital, your efforts will not go unnoticed. You have just created the best driving game of all time. - **Mike Hobbs**

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MARIO PARTY 3

developer: hudson
available: now

publisher: nintendo
system: nintendo64

written by: mike hobbs

Undoubtedly one of the finest multiplayer series around, Mario Party bids adieu to the N64 in this, its third incarnation. Though relatively short on surprises, this sequel is every bit the equal of previous incarnations in terms of fun and social hilarity. Indeed, the world might be a better place if international disputes were settled through a friendly game of Mario Party 3.

I won't go into the various mechanics involved in Mario Party, as they have remained relatively unchanged since the first game. Worth talking about, however, is the suite of new minigames included in Mario Party 3. As always, they are original and mas-

sively fun, the heart of the game to be sure. Running the gamut from 3D shooting contests to mad button mashing exercises and deft controller stick manipulation, the games here are as good as any in the series. And as they should, they induce an atmosphere of raucous competition and hilarious mayhem, especially during those moments when the balance of an entire game can be shifted with a single victory.

It should come as no surprise that Mario Party 3 falls short as a one player game, for the simple reason that there is no laughter during solo sessions. But there has been a concession made for dual play, as a new one

on one battle mode has been introduced, allowing for two to enjoy a completely different experience from the four-player game.

Anyone who's enjoyed the previous incarnations will without question find worth in Mario Party 3, as the new minigames are easily worth the price of admission. And if one has never played Mario Party, this is a perfect opportunity; it's simply impossible not to have a great time with this game, provided of course one has friends to join in on the fun. Now, bring on the GameCube version. ★★★★★



CONFIDENTIAL MISSION

developer: wow
available: now
written by: mike hobbs

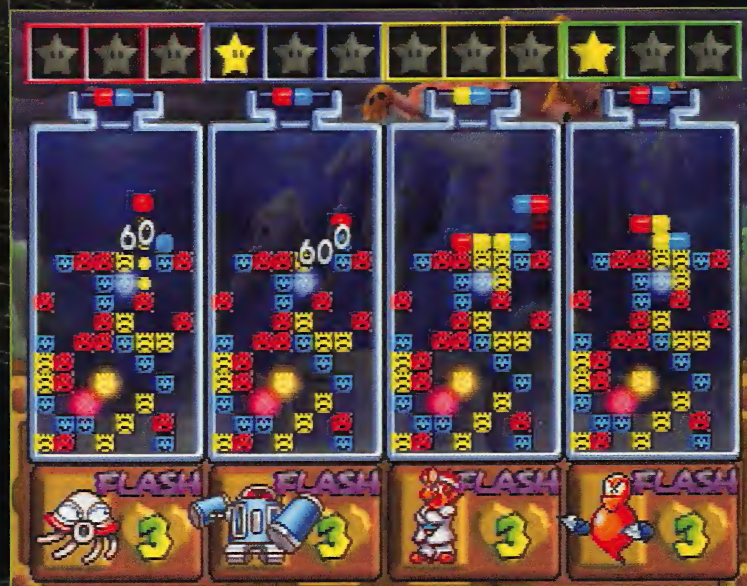
publisher: sega
system: dreamcast

If the Virtua Cop series was born of and can be likened to the John Woo/Hong Kong aesthetic, then Sega's latest light gun shooter, Confidential Mission owes its inspiration to Mission:Impossible and 007, fine territory to mine indeed.

I won't bore you with the particulars of Confidential Mission's scenario, for one thing and one thing only defines a gun game, and that is fun. And youthful gun slinging concerns aside, Confidential Mission is fun. You get hilarious, House of the Dead-style voice overs, superlative graphics,

interesting locations, good enemy placement, and of course, the satisfaction of virtually putting down scores of terrorists.

As a shooter, Confidential Mission's only weakness -- apart from its short, arcade length -- is that in the U.S., the game must be played with the sorry selection of third-party light guns. Yes, the game supports mouse and pad aiming, but that's even more ludicrous as an alternative. ★★★★★



DR. MARIO 64

developer: nintendo
available: now
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: nintendo
system: nintendo64

As a fan of the previous versions of Dr. Mario -- NES, SNES and Game Boy -- I was extremely anxious to try out Mario's pill-poppin' antics on N64. To my delight, not only did I find that Dr. Mario stands the test of time, but this version has enough features and enhancements to make it worth purchasing this puzzler all over again. The big new feature is the ability to play with four players simultaneously. While the versus battles were always great, the thrill of taking out three hapless opponents is even better, and you can even test your skills against

three CPU adversaries. If you get tired of beating your buddies, you can team up for cooperative play too. The game also features multiple playable characters, a new story mode, a score attack, an endurance match, and, of course, good old classic Dr. Mario. These features still don't put Dr. Mario in the company of classics like Tetris, but it's still fun, and a must-have for fans. ★★★★★



TOKYO XTREME ZERO

developer: genki
available: now
written by: mike hobbs

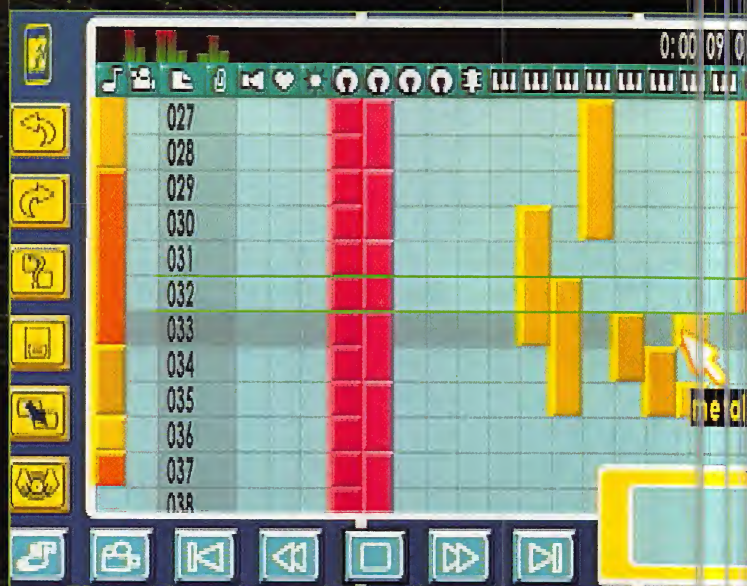
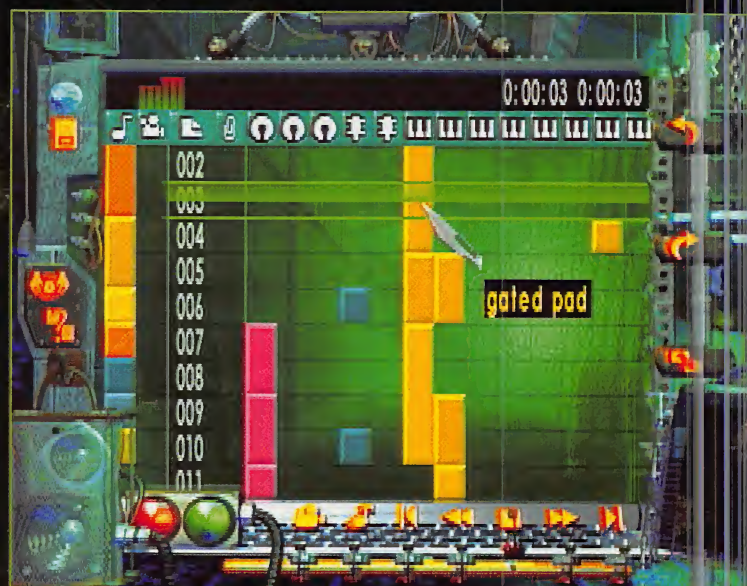
publisher: crave
system: playstation 2

I liked Tokyo Xtreme Racer when I first played it on Dreamcast. Let's see, that was about two years ago. Now, the third game in the series has just debuted on PS 2, and the results couldn't be more predictable. It looks better than the Dreamcast versions, has a couple of new options, but it's the exact same experience that the first one was.

Racing through a nocturnal Tokyo expressway, you challenge fellow drivers of souped-up Japanese steel in a race for supremacy. Stay ahead of your rival long enough and you win, earning respect, and more importantly, money

to upgrade and purchase new cars.

Like the previous two entries, this is a game that grows monotonous really quickly, a fact exasperated by the fact that money comes to you in tiny trickles, making it truly laborious to save up the cash to do any significant upgrading and car buying. This game could be more fun than it is. ★★★★★



MTV MUSIC GEN. 2

developer: jester
available: now
written by: mike hobbs

publisher: codemasters
system: playstation 2

MTV Music Generator 2 isn't a game, and that's the best thing about it. It's creation software, truly a rarity on console, and a bit of fresh air to be honest. Indeed, I lost myself in the creation of my own tune nearly as much as I could lose myself in a good RPG, especially as the process was so easy to grasp and enjoy.

Selecting from a rather huge assortment of pre-recorded samples ranging in style from hard-hitting guitar riffs to blippy electronics, you can create, within a matter of moments, a fairly listenable piece of music. It may not be great,

but that will come with time if you've got it in you. The tunes can be as simple or as complex as you like, and you can even sing along during jam sessions with a USB microphone. And once your song is complete, you can put on a little 3D light show to the music with the included visual editor. My biggest gripe, however, is that the interface becomes rather unwieldy as your song rises in complexity. ★★★★★



PROJECT TITAN

developer: namco
available: now
written by: mike hobbs

publisher: namco
system: playstation

Time Crisis is one of the great light gun games of all time, certainly on console. The game's combination of pinpoint GunCon accuracy and the fun of ducking behind obstacles and popping out to unload some rounds has basically accomplished all that could

be done with a light gun game.

Those same virtues are present in Project Titan, but with a slightly more chaotic and less focused look and feel, the sort of classy appeal of the first game has been lost, replaced by a higher action quotient. ★★★★★



SPIDERMAN

developer: treyarch
available: now
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: activision
system: dreamcast

Simply put, Spider-Man on DC is the best version of a great game. The graphics are better, the sound effects are better, and the gameplay is just as good as it was on the PlayStation. All the characters have been retextured and rebuilt

with more polys, and the cinematics have been redone to match. The zipline move is a bit tougher to use, but you'll adjust. Probably not worth getting if you have it on PS, but still amazing. ★★★★★



SIMPSONS WRESTLING

developer: big ape
available: now
written by: the heartbreak chris

publisher: activision
system: playstation

There have been great Simpsons games. There have been great wrestling games. This is neither. The developers have apparently never played a wrestling game before, or they surely would have realized that gameplay -- even in a parody -- needs

to be more than just mindlessly mashing the buttons. There are few modes, hardly any moves, sloppy control, and zero strategy. TV voice actors provide the sole redeeming feature. To quote Maggie: "Suck, suck, suck." ★★★★★



18 WHEELER

developer: sega
available: june
written by: mike hobbs

publisher: sega
system: dreamcast

It's easy to like 18 Wheeler while one is playing it. Racing through traffic, trying to deliver your cargo ahead of a rival big rig is an experience that's impossible not to like. Playing in first person view, affording the best look at the gaudily appointed truck interiors,

one is treated to a bouncing and squeaking ride that captures perfectly the sensation of bounding along in a vehicle that weighs several metric tons. Too bad the game only lasts about ten minutes. ★★★★★

legend of zelda: oracle series

developer: **capcom**
publisher: **nintendo**

available: **now**
system: **gameboy color**

written by: **chris hoffman**
preview

Only one thing in the gaming world is better than a new Legend of Zelda game -- and that's two Legend of Zelda games. That's what Nintendo is delivering this spring as they unleash Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons and Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages. Produced by Nintendo and developed by Capcom, the new Zelda titles are the result of a match made in gaming heaven.

Though similar in design and identical in feel, Oracle of Ages and Oracle of Seasons are completely unique adventures with distinct dungeons, overworlds, and quests. In Oracle of Seasons (formerly known as Fruit of the Mysterious Tree), you obtain the season rod and can change the time of year (Spring, Summer, Fall or Winter). This results in environmental changes, like plants withering and dying in winter and thus opening up new areas that were blocked before. Long time Zelda fans will love the references to previous adventures, as early parts of the game are reminiscent of the original NES Zelda -- the first dungeon is hidden in a giant tree and the boss is Aquamentus. But there are plenty of new elements too, including mine carts that help you through the dungeons.

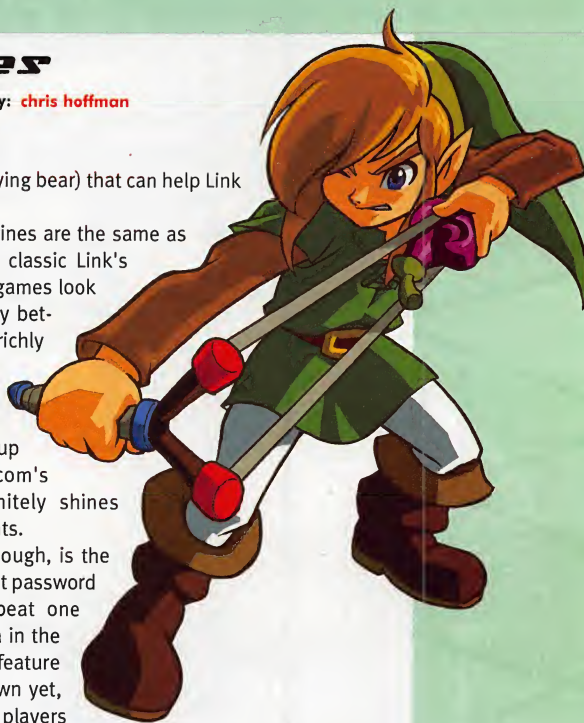
Oracle of Ages, on the other hand, has players warping through time to stop the spread of evil. By using warp points throughout the land, you can travel to the past to obtain necessary equipment or stop evil monsters before they can impact the future. All sorts of traditional Zelda items abound -- the bracelet for lifting items, the roc's feather for jumping, flippers for swimming -- and famous enemies like Octorocks populate the world. Naturally, altering the past has implications for the future world, allowing for some cool twists to the gameplay. Another new addition is the use of

animal buddies (like a flying bear) that can help Link reach new areas.

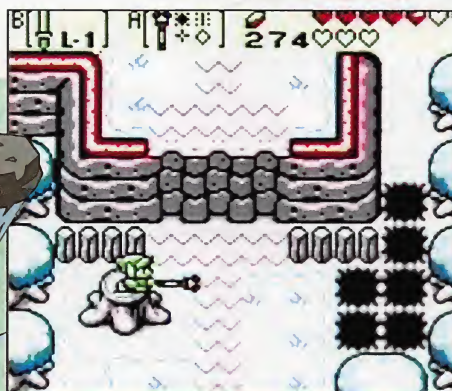
While the graphic engines are the same as what was used for the classic Link's Awakening, both Zelda games look almost incomprehensibly better. The textures are richly enhanced, and the use of color is much more natural. Some nice cutscenes also break up the action, and Capcom's artistic influence definitely shines through in these moments.

Perhaps best of all though, is the fact that by using a secret password feature, players who beat one game can use their data in the other. Though how this feature works isn't entirely known yet, Nintendo promises that players who finish both adventures will be treated to an all-new adventure with a new final boss and an extra ending.

So far both Zelda games are shaping up to be among the upper echelon of Game Boy Color titles. Thanks to Oracle of Ages and Oracle of Seasons, players the world over are going to be putting that backward-compatibility feature of the Game Boy Advance to good use.



zelda: oracle of seasons



zelda: oracle of ages



mega man xtreme 2

dev: capcom
pub: capcom

available: fall
system: gbc

written by: chris hoffman
preview

After gracing us earlier this year with the awesome Mega Man Xtreme, Capcom has already announced that it will be bringing the sequel to Game Boy Color later in 2001. Following in the footsteps of the SNES Mega Man X series, Xtreme 2 re-creates some of the classic 16-bit levels from X2 and X3 on Game Boy Color, along with their famous animal-inspired bosses like Overdrive Ostrich and the dreaded Wire Sponge. Zero, Mega

Man's Maverick-hunting buddy, will also make his handheld debut as a playable character, complete with all his deadly sword moves. The story in Xtreme 2, meanwhile, is completely original, as the heroes try to stop a deadly virus that can erase Reploid programming, as well as a "DNA Soul" chip that can reproduce Replids from the past or even conjure up Sigma, X's sworn nemesis. Looks awesome so far.



grandia: parallel trippers

dev: game arts
pub: hudson

available: now (jpn)
system: gbc

written by: chris hoffman
preview

One of the best RPG series ever, Grandia, has gone portable. In Grandia: Parallel Trippers, you play a boy who is torn from his world and winds up in the Grandia universe where he meets up with many favorite characters from the original Grandia, including that game's hero, Justin, his love interest, Feena, and others including Sue, Puffy and Lieta. Players will also recognize the battle system from the previous games. Although the real-time interaction of the parties

duking it out has been replaced by still pics of the monsters, the action gauge at the bottom of the screen still allows for strategic battles of timing combo-filled fighting. Colorful graphics compliment the adventure well, and minigames of a sort, where you navigate a river on a boat and burrow through the earth in a drill tank, spice up the adventure. No word has been given on a U.S. release of Grandia for GBC, but hopefully a company will pick it up soon.



toki tori

dev: two tribes
pub: capcom

available: july
system: gbc

written by: chris hoffman
review

Addictive and challenging are the best words to describe Toki Tori. Part action, part puzzle game, this title has you controlling a little bird named Toki Tori through maze-like stages on a quest to collect his prized eggs. Toki's abilities are severely limited - he can barely hop - thus making pits and enemies monumental obstacles, but fortunately players enter each level with tools like wall-movers, freeze rays and bridge-layers to help out.

Figuring out how and when to use the finite number of tools is what the game is all about, and this emphasis on thinking and strategy make the game a rare handheld treat. Transparency and parallax effects highlight the simple but colorful graphics, and more than 60 stages of increasing difficulty await. Actually, there's one more key word that describes Toki Tori: fun. Toki Tori is definitely worth checking out.

★★★★★



pokemon crystal

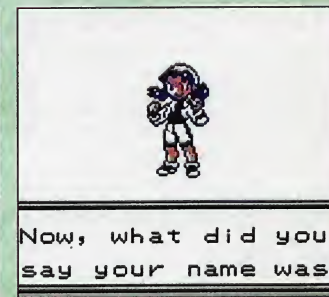
dev: game freak
pub: nintendo

available: june
system: gbc

written by: chris hoffman
preview

Hey, this is different: a Pokemon game on Game Boy! Who'd have imagined? In all seriousness though, Pokemon is a solid series, and every indication is that Pokemon Crystal will be the best game the series has seen yet. Much like Pokemon Yellow, Pokemon Crystal is a remix of the games that preceded it, in this case Pokemon Gold and Silver. The game world is the same, the maps are the same, but numerous little changes have been

made - in particular, the distribution of monsters is different, so critters that were nigh impossible to catch before may be much easier to obtain. Battle sequences will be fully animated this time around, and also, players can now choose whether they want their main character to be male or female, thus making Crystal a perfect choice for all gender-bending gamers. Unfortunately, the online play of the Japanese version will probably not be retained.



mobilized gaming

MLB 2002

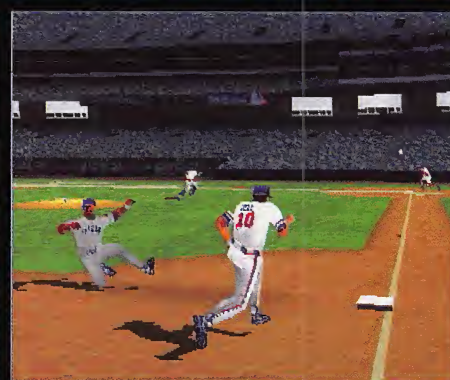
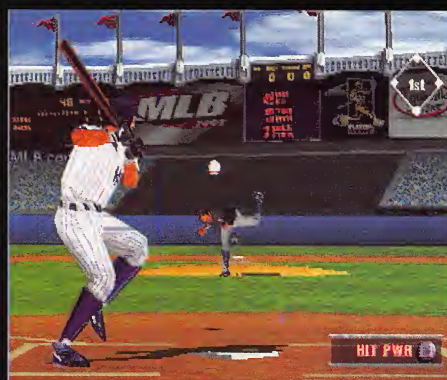
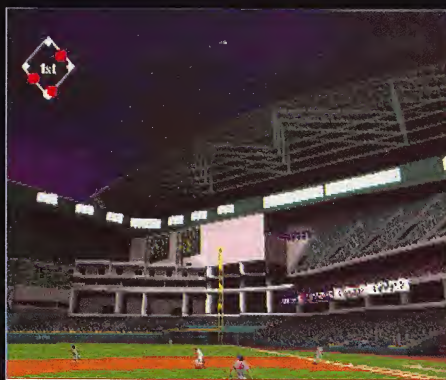
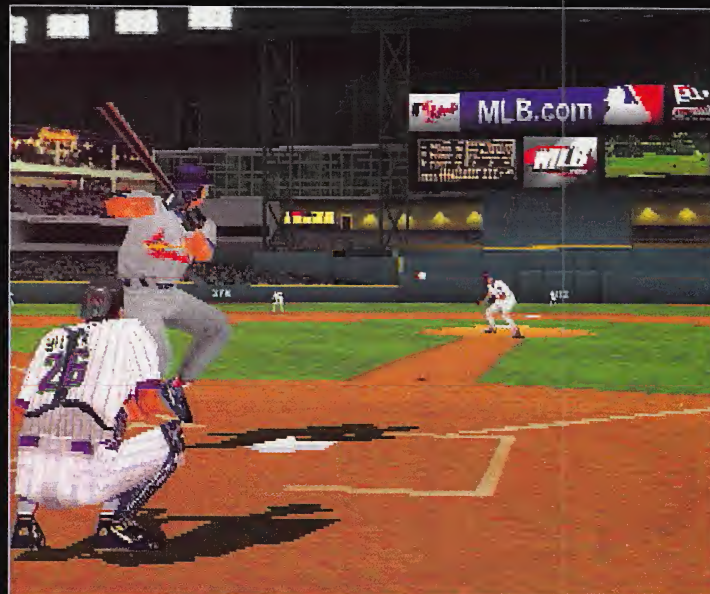
developer: 989 sports
available: may
written by: steve thomason

publisher: scea
system: playstation
review

It may be a little late in coming, but MLB 2002 by 989 Sports is a really solid game of baseball. The graphics aren't particularly awe-inspiring on Sony's aging 32-bit hardware, but the batting and pitching interfaces are among the best I've seen. They're intuitive, simple to use, and customizable for different levels of experience. I'm not quite as fond of the fielding interface, and I think the outfielders move just a little too slow, but it's certainly passable and as good, if not better than most other baseball titles. As far as presentation goes, Vin Scully and Dave Campbell do a nice job on commentary, and some of the new camera angles were well chosen to make the game feel more like an authentic telecast.

For the hardcore baseball fan, you'll not find a more complete and up-to-date package. All of the new stadiums are here, including PNC Park in Pittsburgh and Safeco Field in Seattle. The player rosters also seem to be as current as humanly possible, although it's becoming increasingly difficult to keep track these days. Most importantly, the always popular Franchise Mode allows would-be General Managers to build their team into a dynasty through trades, free agency, and successful utilization of the farm system.

This is the fifth installment of the MLB franchise, and the years of tweaking have culminated in what might be the PlayStation's finest representation of America's pastime. It's not perfect (there are far too many homeruns), but baseball seems to be the most difficult sport to re-create in video game form. Let's hope this high standard of quality carries over to PS2. ★★★★★



BASS STRIKE

developer: pai
available: summer
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: thq
system: playstation 2
preview

Upon hearing the name, I thought Bass Strike might be about an invasion of evil fish swarming the nation. Alas, Bass Strike is actually just a typical fishing title. Well, maybe not so typical: it's an incredibly good-looking and lifelike fishing title -- almost unquestionably the best ever seen in a console fishing game, visually speaking. Bass Strike also offers unmatched depth, with some 120 types of lures and seven lakes directly from the real bass fishing tournaments, and it's officially licensed by the fishmasters at the Bass Angler Sportsman Society. Bass Strike will feature multiple modes (arcade, tournament, and practice) and THQ's split-screen lure-cam will let you see all the underwater action.





COOL BOARDERS 2001

developer: idol minds
available: may
written by: steve thomason

publisher: scea
system: playstation 2
preview

Cool Boarders was one of those franchises that garnered quite a following in the PlayStation's early days for reasons I could never quite comprehend and now it's making its U.S. PlayStation 2 debut in the form of Cool Boarders 2001; I specify U.S. because Cool Boarders Alien is already out in Japan, but this is a completely different game by an entirely separate development team. Unfortunately, neither title is particularly good, and both pale in comparison to the new standard-bearer in snowboarding, SSX.

The problem with Cool Boarders 2001 is that it's almost completely unoriginal, and the expected visual enhancements that come with

next-generation hardware are slightly underwhelming in this case. Also, while the game typically moves along at breakneck speeds, there are some moments of extreme slow-down that really affect gameplay.

Hopefully these issues can be remedied before the game's release, but I'm not going to hold my breath. Still, if you don't like SSX for whatever bizarre reason, and happen to be a big Cool Boarders fan, CB 2001 might be something to look forward to. It does have a fairly extensive career mode, as well as a full roster of actual snowboarding pros. Then again, maybe you should just try SSX again when the DVD version comes out later this year.



SHAUN PALMER'S PRO SNOWBOARDER

developer: uep systems
available: fall
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: activision
system: playstation 2
preview

As part of Activision's new "O2" extreme sports brand, Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder is set to help redefine the snowboarding genre, just as Tony Hawk did for skateboarding. Playing as Palmer or nine other real pros, players get to compete in freestyle trick competitions and "boardercross" races as they battle to be the best in the world. Though you start out at the bottom of the ranks, pulling off death-defying stunts and learning the numerous secrets of every course will let you dominate the slopes. Ten real locations set the stage for snow-shredding excitement, and real sponsors and equipment manufacturers add to the realism. Ironically, the developer, UEP, originally made Cool Boarders.



CMX 2001

developer: pcpl
available: summer
written by: chris hoffman

publisher: thq
system: playstation 2
preview



If nothing else, CMX2002 looks about a million times better than previous Championship Motocross games. However, THQ promises there's more to the game than just its looks -- a lot more. CMX2002 has 30 real pro riders including James "Bubba" Stewart, Mike Larocco, Kevin Windham, and Carmichael himself, plus 25 tracks from four tournament circuits such as the Chevy Trucks U.S. Motocross Championships and the THQ U.S. Open. Ten types of bikes will be selectable, and all of them will be fully customizable so you can pull off freestyle tricks and signature stunt moves all the better. Traditional racing modes and freestyle riding are featured, and six multiplayer modes are also available. There's even a custom character mode where you can be backed by authentic sponsors.

top ten selling japanese titles



1	Gran Turismo 3 A-spec playstation 2	6	One Piece Grand Battle playstation
2	One Piece B.O.T.P.D. game boy	7	D.Q. Monsters 2 (Ruka) game boy
3	Hamster Tarou 2 game boy	8	F-Zero for GBA game boy advance
4	Super Mario Advance game boy advance	9	Bomberman game boy advance
5	D.Q. Monsters 2 (Iru) game boy	10	Armored Core 2: AA playstation 2

GITAROO MAN

developer: 326
written by: mike hobbs

publisher: koei
available: july

preview

Koei is the last publisher I would ever have expected to get into the rhythm game genre. But what's even more surprising than the very existence of such an effort is that it's actually looking really good.

Though we've only had one level to play around with, recently released in Japan as a low-priced Maxi-single, Gitaroo Man exhibits not only originality but also a beautifully twisted design sense and story line that only the Japanese could have cooked up.

Gitaroo Man's play is totally unique, with no easy parallels to be drawn with existing rhythm games like Samba de Amigo! or PaRappa. Using the left analog stick to follow a curling string of guitar riffs, Gitaroo Man attacks his enemies with timed button presses and defends in the same way. In the one level demo, he battles with a group of flying saucers called Vanishing-O, taking to the skies in the final climactic



showdown. With its catchy tune and off the wall humor, this sequence bodes very well for the rest of the game, coming in July in Japan, and surprise, surprise, the U.S. later this year.

AIR RANGER: RESCUE HELICOPTER

developer: ask
written by: mike hobbs

publisher: ask
available: now

review

Ever since I expressed interest in the original Aero Wings for Dreamcast, I have developed a reputation in the office for liking funky flying games from Japan. Most think me a bit daft (who else would have shelled out the big bucks for Taito's Jet de Go!, complete with geek-fest airline flight controller), but I readily admit to loving these sorts of things. Which meant that when Ask's Air Ranger: Rescue Helicopter arrived from our importer, it was all me, no squabbling.

Too bad for everyone else, for unlike most flight curiosities that only I and the game's mother could love, Air Ranger is a broadly appealing

game. Yes, you do have to sort of like flight-based games to really appreciate this, but in its concept, graphics, and overall satisfaction, Air Ranger proves immensely pleasurable.

The game's unique concept is this: as a helicopter pilot for a rescue squad, it's your job to fly into hazardous areas and airlift people out or perform other life saving duties, whether its rescuing passengers from a sinking ship, dousing the flames of a factory fire, or removing a log jam. Sound a bit dry? Well, I guess it is, but it works because the feeling of flying the various helicopters is spot on, with a good deal of physical satisfaction to be had from precisely maneuvering and piloting these machines.

And the graphics are surprisingly good as well. Dense cityscapes and teeming forests stretch out below in a fairly inspiring display, and a wealth of view options always allow for the perfect vantage point. There's even an in cockpit view which allows you to look over at your female co-pilot. Neat.

With only eight missions to offer, Air Ranger is over a bit too soon, but those with a penchant for games off the beaten path, or fellow aero-freaks such as myself, will surely enjoy this.

★★★★☆



HUNDRED SWORDS

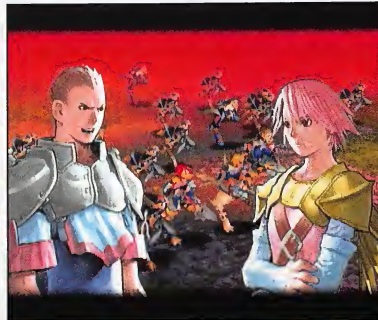
developer: smilebit
written by: steve thomason

publisher: sega
available: now

preview

Smilebit has to be one of the most talented and diverse development teams in the industry. Their newest title, Hundred Swords, could not be more dissimilar to their previous effort, the phenomenal Jet Grind Radio. Whereas Jet Grind was a modernistic action title steeped in the street artist counterculture, Hundred Swords is a much more cerebral experience with a rich classical setting. It is a real-time strategy game tailored for the console market with a strong focus on narrative and a distinctly unique art style. It is also visually astounding and possesses a game engine capable of displaying hundreds of remarkably detailed units on-screen at once.

Aside from what it brings to the table in terms of presentation, however, Hundred Swords also delivers one of the most compelling strategy experiences I've encountered in quite some time. The battles themselves are challenging, and the typical strategy of building up a huge army and simply overpowering the enemy usually doesn't work due to limited resources and aggressive AI. Instead, you must formulate a careful plan of attack and utilize the terrain to your maximum advantage. Should warring the computer become tiresome, the game can also be played online with up to three human opponents.



Methinks the ultimate test for SegaNet could be handling four huge regiments each comprised of over a hundred troops, but after the job they've done thus far I have faith in the network.

Unfortunately, Hundred Swords is exceedingly difficult to work through without a solid grasp of the Japanese language, making it one of the less import-friendly titles out there. It's also not playable online unless you live in Japan. Let's hope Sega of America does the right thing and brings it to these shores before the Dreamcast falls by the wayside.

WINNING ELEVEN 5

developer: kcet
written by: mike hobbs

publisher: konami
available: now

preview

Thus far, Konami's PS2 soccer efforts have lagged far behind EA's FIFA series. The first, Jikkyou World Soccer, was marred by atrocious slow-down and lackluster graphics, redeeming itself only with its fast, ragged play. Things improved with Jikkyou 2001, but FIFA was still far and away the class of the field, especially graphically.

This has changed with Konami's release of Winning Eleven 5, a new game from the ground up, and a proper successor to the much-liked ISS series. Though still not a match for FIFA in terms of character modeling and overall presentation, this game represents a huge leap for Konami's soccer efforts. But best of all, its gameplay easily trounces FIFA, making it the very best soccer game currently available for PS2.

Indeed, FIFA comes across now like a shallow arcade game, and if that's your thing, so be it. But Winning Eleven 5's realistic slant makes it a far more rewarding game to play well, and the generally low scoring matches capture the intensity of real soccer's precious goals.

I have to admit however to being initially put out by WE5. At first crack, the control seemed dreadfully slow. Players seemed to move like sticks in the mud, with passing and shooting happening seemingly seconds after the appropriate button was pressed. But just a little bit more play revealed that what was actually happening was a sign of the game's penchant for realism, having to compensate for the player's inherent inertia and foot placement. Within a small amount of time, I adapted to this and learned the game's rhythm, and the rest, as they say, was history.

I haven't even touched on the game's encyclopedic scope of players, teams, modes, and other assorted goodies, but as WE5 is all in Japanese, well, I simply couldn't understand it all. Still, this is such a fantastically good-playing game of soccer that it survives on its basic play alone, and as no U.S. release is in sight, it makes a great import purchase. ★★☆☆



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ANGEL LINKS

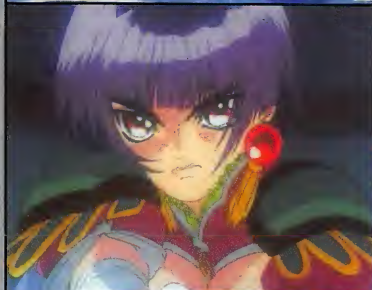
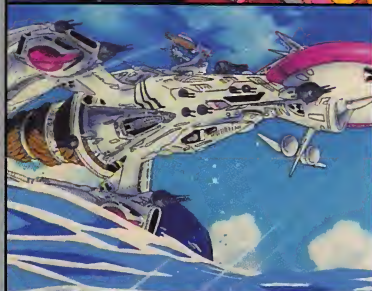
studio: bandai entertainment

bilingual

runtime: 100 minutes

genre: sci-fi/action/adventure

reviewed by: dave halpern



Take a single component from *Outlaw Star* and turn it into a mini-series all its own and you've got *Angel Links*, the first spin-off from the *Outlaw Star* universe. The saga follows a 16-year-old space ship commander, Meifon Li, as she carries out her grandfather's dying wish: to run a free escort service, offering protection from pirates to those who can't afford it. The *Angel Links* and her crew do so in the richest frontier of space, a system where unarmed cargo vessels are left to haul valuable minerals through pirate infested territory. Of course, the other security firms who need to charge for their services aren't too thrilled about *Angel Links*, and among pirates, Miss Li is pretty much the most hated chick in the galaxy (even if she has a bod at 16 that could make a grown man cry).

For a premise primed for a formulaic fate, *Angel Links'* writers make the best of the situation, breaking from the drone of space battles with some interesting side stories, like guarding a two-mile-long flying space whale, called a Lief, that supposedly gives you immortality if you eat its liver. And although there's not a whole lot of character development

going on in volume 1, what's here, especially concerning *Angel Links'* reptilian crew member, a Dragonite named Duuz (who interrogated Gene Starwind once upon a time), is pretty good. As for Meifon, she's gonna have a tough time becoming the next Gene Starwind if she doesn't bring it down a notch. She pretty much yells all of her lines, and between screaming "Angel Links launch!" inevitably followed by "fire the Angel Links' cannon!" (the way she wins literally every air battle), by episode four you want her to put a sock in it. Oh, and did I mention that she has a small creature living between her ample breasts that becomes a living sword? You see, this is why I love anime.

Angel Links' best qualities as the credits role on Volume 1 on are not surprisingly the character and ship designs (worth the price of the DVD by themselves) and the opening animation which you can run sans text on the DVD (the silhouette work is insane). There's also some nice CG work going on and the overall production is suitably polished. If the story evolves to match the quality of the rest of the show, *Angel Links* will join the ranks among the most elite anime series. ★★★★★

The Hunt For The Past Begins Now



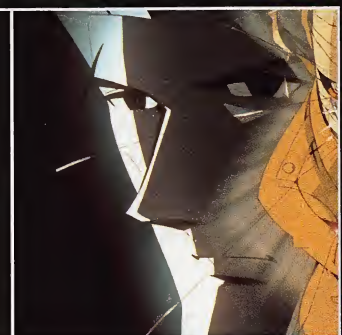
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MAGIC USER'S CLUB VOL. 1

studio: anime works
genre: magic/comedy

runtime: 60 minutes
reviewed by: christina alexander

bilingual

Hey, what a cool DVD case! That's the first thing to come to mind when first picking up the *Magic User's Club* DVD. Since humans are so easily impressed by things that are shiny and clear, Anime Works seems to be off on the right foot with the packaging of its new series. Luckily that's not the only great thing about *Magic User's*. The translation of this rather silly and fun-to-watch anime seems to be very solid, as Anime Works even translates the smallest bits of Japanese text that are sometimes overlooked in other translations.

Earth has been attacked by horrible aliens, and the combined military might of the earth's countries are not enough to repel the threat. Fortunately, the horrible aliens never actually attack unless first provoked, and the spherical

probes that they do send down to the surface always follow traffic signals.

Sae Sawanoguchi is a freshman in high school, and she is determined to make a difference. All her life she has never been able to do anything right, but now after hearing the moving speech made by the president of the Magic Club at her school, Sae wants to help rid the earth of the alien threat. The problem is that Sae is fairly inept in the use of magic, and her attempts usually put herself and others in more danger than they started off. Hopefully Sae's desire to help her fellow humans can override her lack of magical ability. ★★★★★



THE BIG O VOL. 1

studio: bandai entertainment
genre: sci-fi/action

runtime: 100 minutes
reviewed by: christina alexander

bilingual

The Big O is easily one of the strangest, most different and fun anime seen in some time. Not to mention the name sounds incredibly ridiculous. The very first thing to enter your mind as you look at the screenshots is, Hey? Did the Batman people do this? Is this American? And the answer is, no. The look of *Big O* is heftily American- and "Batman Animated Series"-inspired. The city, its people, and the machines used are very gothic and dark. Colors are muted and the traditional tri-tone color system of normal anime has been tossed out the door in favor of dual tone color. If nothing else, the look of this anime should make you curious.

Paradigm City is a dark city without a past, as all of its citizens have inexplicably lost their memories, which is a very horrifying thought if one

really thinks about it. How would humans survive with none of the collective knowledge that they have previously acquired? The citizens of Paradigm City relearned some of their lost knowledge and now they have semi-normal lives once again. However, everyone knows that without their memories, they have still lost something very important. Perhaps the strangest thing about Paradigm City is that it has a robotic protector--a giant mech that rises from the ground whenever the city is threatened, both frightens and reassures the citizens.

Roger Smith, who looks disturbingly like Bruce Wayne, is Paradigm City's top Negotiator. His job is to mediate between two parties to help a deal run smoothly. To serve as another parallel to Batman, Roger Smith is an extremely wealthy bachelor who has various mechanical tools and toys with which to ply his trade. What the city doesn't know is that he is owner and controller of its savior robot.

The parallels between this anime and Batman may be a little too strong for some fans, but *Big O* clearly has its own agenda, and imitation is the highest form of flattery.

★★★★★





AMON SAGA

studio: manga
genre: action/adventure

runtime: 75 minutes
reviewed by: dave halverson

english dubbed



In Amon Yoshitaka's Amon Saga (hey, Amon-Amon, what gives) the evil Emperor of a massive mobile fortress-a living land mass resembling an enormous tortoise-kidnaps a princess to exchange her for a map which holds the key to an underground city of gold. Hey, I'll give you one guess at what he gets if he happens to find it...evil Emperors are so predictable. The only thing his lordship didn't bargain for was Amon, the son of a woman he killed in cold blood many, many years before. Amon gains access to the fortress when the castle general, in a move to strengthen his forces, stops in a small village to recruit some grunts. The contest to win a spot in the prestigious Imperial army is simple: There are nine ladders leading to the fortress, and about a

hundred men. The first 20 to make it up are in-brutal yet effective. Amon, an all around exceptional warrior, easily passes the challenge, and it's off to war we go. Once inside the city, Amon and the captive Princess, Lichia, form a relationship (something he didn't bargain for), and an epic sword and sorcery tale begins to unfurl. As old school anime goes it doesn't get much better. Yoshitaka (character designer of Vampire Hunter D and Final Fantasy) provides the impressive visuals while the English dialogue, which actually borders on intelligent, is about as good as it gets. The story, although somewhat predictable, is accompanied by a serious dramatic score and the animation quality never disappoints. With buckets of action, adventure and sorcery, and a little lust intertwined, Amon Saga makes 1986 seem like it wasn't all that long ago. ★★★★★

LOST UNIVERSE VOL. 5&6

studio: adv films
genre: sci-fi/action

runtime: 125minutes
reviewed by: christina alexander

bilingual

Kain, Canal and Millie finally near the end of their journey. With the disappearance of Lieutenant Rail and the discovery of a new Lost Ship, Kain's battle just got that much harder. Nightmare has finally decided to make their move to wrest control of the galaxy from the Universal Police, and with the power of several Lost Ships under their command it doesn't look to be a very tough battle. Having been abandoned "for her own good" Millie is slightly outraged and determined to find her way back onto the Swordbreaker and next to Kain where she feels she belongs. Kain must somehow overcome his tendency to be impetuous and take unnecessary risks, while Canal has become almost obsessed with saving Kain from the fate of his grandmother. She has already lost one Master, and she isn't about to lose another one. There is also an ugly secret to the mastering of a Lost Ship. Not only are the ships more powerful than whole fleets of battleships, but they require something from their captains, and it is something that most people aren't willing to give up.

After a short departure from the main plot of Lost Universe, its good to see the series, back on track and more interesting than ever. Most all the hints of humor have disappeared, as the gravity of Kain's situation has increased a hundred-fold. What was once a series filled with levity has taken a turn for the dark and morose

with an Evangelion-like quickness. The major problem that the series of Lost Universe has, is that its ability to parcel out the important bits of story in a timely manners is non-existent. Much of the information that is obtained in the last two DVDs could have easily been dispersed much earlier in the series saving it from the black hole of boredom that became the middle of the series. Luckily Lost Universe ends with episodes that keep you glued to the screen. ★★★★★





PARALLEL DUAL VOL. 3 & 4

studio: pioneer entertainment
genre: sci-fi/action

runtime: 75 & 100 mins
reviewed by: christina alexander

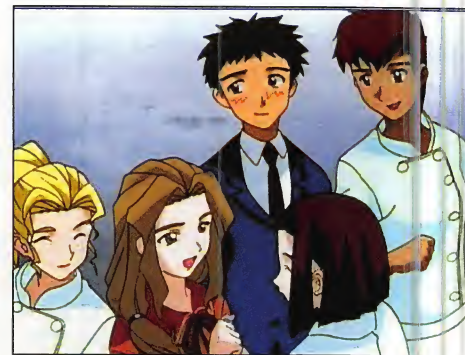
bilingual

Just like Tenchi, the main character in *Parallel Dual*, Kazuki adds yet another woman to his already large harem of females who would like to have him all to themselves. Being trapped behind enemy lines has made Kazuki a prisoner of the Rara army. Fortunately, no one knows that he is really a pilot for the other side. To his surprise, Kazuki has been rescued by the infamous Miss Ra. Yes, the same costumed woman with the freakish makeup, who announces all of Rara's attacks before they happen. Kazuki soon discovers that Miss Ra is far different from the person she projects onto the screen.

Coming into the end of the series, *Parallel Dual* is still soundly lacking in information for the viewer, and it is quite surprising to learn that the fourth DVD is the last one. The

power struggle between the two armies is punctuated by the breaking down of the barriers between the two parallel worlds, and the fighting takes the pilots from world to world as everything becomes more and more unstable. Kazuki and his counterpart in the parallel world are the keys to stopping both worlds from collapsing completely. The problem is that Kazuki must convince the Rara army that if the fighting doesn't stop, then everyone will die.

Parallel Dual is a fun ride, but it leaves you in the dark for a long period of time, and the massive information dump that takes place in the last DVD is neither satisfyingly complete nor really understandable. But, even though the story may be lacking in some places, the genuine likeability of the characters and their trials almost makes up for the lack of understanding. *Parallel Dual* is still well worth your cash. ★★★★★



GENERATOR GAWL VOL. 3

studio: adv films
genre: sci-fi/action

runtime: 75 minutes
reviewed by: christina alexander

bilingual

Gawl is having a harder and harder time keeping his secrets. The continuous need to keep Generating, the sudden disappearances, and the battle wounds are all making Masami very suspicious. As the seriousness of Gawl's mission increases, it wears away at his usual happy-go-lucky exterior. His sudden mood changes do not go unnoticed by his friends. Gawl is not the only one under more strain. Koji and Ryo are also starting to crack under the pressure of the importance of their mission. With the appearance of yet another enemy Generator, Gawl's condition only worsens. Less than two weeks remain for Gawl and his companions to stop what will be the massacre of the world's population. Even though things are taking a turn for the worse, Gawl begins to learn the importance of friends and family.

This third DVD is the best yet, providing much-needed background information about

Gawl, Koji, and Ryo, and why they decided to take on this mission in the first place. Unlike other series, *Generator Gawl* has not suffered from a loss in quality during the middle of the series. Its usually at this point that many series take a turn for the boring with filler episodes containing sub-par animation, and irrelevant episodic storylines. However, *Gawl* has managed to remain insanely interesting, and the animation hasn't lost a speck of respectability, which is really something to applaud. By bringing this anime over to the U.S., and making sure the subtitled and the dubbed versions are not lacking in any way, ADV definitely deserves major kudos for what is their best current series. ★★★★★



Hello Gamers' Republic tribe! Ryan Brookhart here to bring you some toy news. Gee, I was just looking around at the new digs at GR and I'm really impressed. But where the hell is the hot tub?



Anyway, on to cool little pieces of sculpted plastic. First up is Shrek, as in the line of toys based upon the titular film; I've seen it, it's funny, and the toys, by omnipresent McFarlane Toys, are very nice. They are, also, sadly, mostly not toys at all. Donkey, (voiced by Eddie Murphy) has a great sculpt but is not at all posable. Except for his neck. Still, with the concealed button on the back of his neck (enabling him to "speak") he's fine by me. The other two toys from this line I think are standouts are the 14" posable plush Shrek with the very detailed sculpted face, and the Dragon Battlin' Shrek.



Here's the latest peashooter from Koto Inc's impressive Front Mission 3 collection, the In Wanzer. Funny name, cool mech. Peas not included.



Soul Reaver was my second favorite game on the Dreamcast, and I went nuts when I found out figures were being made of both Kain and Raziel. Well, here from the fine folks at Blue Box Toys, Kain and Raziel! Check out my photos! Aren't they sweet? At any rate, these figures will be shipping throughout the summer months. Look for them on-line at places like cytoonline and at video game retailers. They'll set you back about \$20 each, but they are loaded with features, bases, and (praise the toy gods) lots of articulation! While on the subject of Blue Box, check out one of the new Cy Girls (above right) in the neat Ninja-like outfit.



In other news, fans of Onimusha: Warlords have good reason to be excited. Dragon Models, makers of some of the best, most detailed 12" figures in the world, have snagged the license. Trust me on this, you will not believe your eyes when you see these figures. No release date has been set, but hav-

ing seen the prototypes, I think it's fair to say they'll be going into production soon.

Also, a collective sigh can be heard from Akira fans. The Keneda statue McFarlane Toys made last year will now come with his bike in a box set where he, get this, will actually be

able to ride his bike! Will wonders never cease (read: heavy sarcasm). Lastly, I'll be at E3 this year getting the low-down on all things toy related on your favorite video games. I have some good info right now, but I don't want to spoil it. Also I would hate to get sued. Gives me heartburn.



Hanging somewhere between P.O.D. and 311, Alien Ant Farm brings forth a rap metal alternative that grates a little less than their benefactors, Papa Roach (they've signed with Roach's New Noize label) while offering enough of a lyrical hook to be viable in the ever-burgeoning category. There's a ton of similar fare out there so you'd best test the waters before you commit but Ant Farm's energetic, and, dare I say, fun approach, is definitely welcome. Between Korn, P.O.D. 311, etc., etc., I guess you can never have enough music to skate to, plus the logo kicks ass.

★★★★★



What do you get when you cross the best female lead since Alanis, Jasmine Rodgers, whose hypnotic vocals flutter between silky smooth and undulating power, exquisite song writing with a hint of J-pop coolness, and a band that can channel seamlessly between ethereal dirges and thick rock ballads? BoA. And if there's any justice in the world, they'll be the next big thing, or at least appear among them. Anime fans may have already heard BoA without even knowing it, as their single, "Duvet," opens the sci-fi series, Serial Experiment Lain. But it is beyond "Duvet" where songs like "Suicide is Rain" suck you into their ambrosial parallel universe.

★★★★★



As a gamer, I can't help but melt into a blissful stupor as Daft Punk's melange of AM radio compression, recycled Supertramp, electrified Eddie Van Halen licks, and Micheal Jackson "tah's" as in "tonight-tah" reverberate in the air. Fighting off getting that gd Cher song stuck in my head for another month as the synthesized vocals chirp away, I realize that this is what electronica needed back when it was supposed to become the next big thing (before Firestarter came along and freaked everyone out). Pure genius most of the time, the Parisian duo has produced the best electronica since Cassius had us sliding around the flat track in living color while producing the freshest new overall sound in years.

★★★★★



I'm kind of pissed because I was supposed to love God Says No, Monster Magnet's follow-up to their forth (and by far best) album, Powertrip, especially after Silver Future sounded so good on the Heavy Metal 2000 soundtrack. But beyond the title track, and "Melt," by far the best tracks on the disc, the new MM sounds surprisingly generic. It's as if Lynard Skynard seeped into their brains while they slept. Where that cool "Space Lord" hook went I do not know, but I sure miss it. Wyndorf still wails with the best of 'em, and the funky Iron Butterfly organ vibe shines through a couple of times, but otherwise MM's sound has taken a step in the wrong direction.

★★★★★



If you've been waiting for that new Days of the New disc, it's time to start thinking about the way Sting's been having sex because Todd, Jesse, and Matt have found themselves a new lead singer, Hugo Ferreira, and formed Tantric. You can finally slide that worn-out Creed CD back into the sleeve because this is the best rock album of 2001 thus far. Hugo's kicked the Kentucky hook out of the quartet and given them an even better sound than before, if you can believe it. This guy possesses the kind of meaty bone-chilling chops that make any song sound good, so you can imagine the marriage between his vocals and the groups already masterful songwriting. Tantric's debut is a tight, smooth, and gratifying ride that lasts a good long time.

★★★★★



Whether you label it neo-prog hard rock, metal, or just rock, Big Wreck, with their second full length disc "The Pleasure and the Greed," is laying it down better than just about anyone else out there. Shades of Deep Purple and Whitesnake shimmer through the first track, "Inhale," as if the legendary sound of metal past had finally found a new host, immediately followed by "Undersold," opening with a crisp acoustical intro. That'll drudge up any residual chills from Dog and Butterfly. And then it gets better. Remember when plangent drum licks, thick bass lines, and dual guitars folded together like shuffling cards? Well, there's a little of that in here, and it really makes you hate those fuckin' oy bands! This is the retro assimilation you've been waiting for, the intensity of metal past with just the right dose of alternative.

★★★★★



Every song tells a story. Some just paint their words with gentle warmth and care. On *Abulum*, Glen Phillips has pulled out the more traditional pop-rock roots he planted as lead singer of Toad the Wet Sprocket and replaced them with spare, pensive melodies of heavy folk-rock influence that evoke images of small-town comfort and introspective summertime backyard conversation. These are songs that cast a subtle spirit, dancing to life with the kind of infectious thrust that has you humming after the first listen, playing the modest structures around a campfire the next week on your perfectly worn six-string. And underneath the easy listening is a river of gentle emotion. On "Drive By," Phillip's soothing voice tells of a boy and his dysfunctional yet

unspoken bond with his father, a neighbor's dog and a desperate plea to God for repentance in exchange for the dog's life: "I will never get high, I will never jack off/I will be all the things that I should but have not." On the solemn "Train Wreck," Phillips evokes longing and empathy, building images of a country town in need: "By a long stretch of farmland/where the waters have run high/and run the topsoil down the river/so that next year there would be no crops." Every song carries a hidden poignancy, mined only after the songs are given time to bloom upon multiple listens. In a barren wasteland of manufactured pop and indignant rock, *Abulum* is a gentle and beautiful burst of inspired songwriting.

★★★★★

GR: How do you guys like Los Angeles?
STEVE: Yeah, lovely. Next Question [everyone laughs].

GR: We're gonna write that. But we'll clean it up.

GR: Where did the band originate from and how did you end up forming "Boa"?
STEVE: We started about a couple months ago.

JASMINE: [yelling] Eight Years ago! New Malden!

STEVE: No, eight years ago. Our drummer got us all together, he wanted to get a super group of musicians he played with from different bands. He wanted to get the best people together.

That's what happened, he got us together. We didn't have a singer, but we all started playing together. First there was me, the sole drummer Ed and then Paul. Ed knew Alex from a previous band. Alex came in. We rehearsed at my dad's house. And Jasmine used to come up and sit in the corner, she was only about five years old at the time. She started singing with us. So we said, we'd give her a chance.

JASMINE: Hold on! She was really about 16.

STEVE: She was alright, ya'know. Lee actually killed the last drummer, so that's why he's involved.

GR: Ahh.. it all makes sense now. So there was a murdering here.

STEVE: Yeah. You know, murders and drummers.

JASMINE: Not our Lee! He's incredibly expensive.

GR: Besides music, what are some of your other hobbies?

JASMINE: I'm currently studying for several degrees in Anthropology, Archeology and others.

GR: Wow.

JASMINE: Not that "wow," it's a lot of work.

PAUL: Besides music, I'm a computer programmer, web designer. Banjo teaching.

ALEX: I like music and that's it.

STEVE: Used to be martial arts, write songs, work out. That's about it really.

JASMINE: Lee does Shaolin! I used to do Shaolin. Steve did Karate. Alex did Voodoo. Paul did Origami.

PAUL: Judo, actually. I did Judo for seven years.

JASMINE: What a liar! He's lying.

PAUL: I did Judo for seven years. National English team. I scored under 19. I was actually 28 at the time.

STEVE: Paul was a professional wrestler in the '80s. They used to call him "Big Mama."

GR: I heard about him!

STEVE: That wasn't me, it was my twin brother.

GR: Your debut record, "Race of a Thousand Camels," came out in 1998 overseas. The domestic version,

"Twilight," recently appeared in March 2001. Why did it take so long for a domestic version to appear, with such a huge U.S. fan base?

JASMINE: It's because it does take a long time to get another record company in a different country. We had a lot of fans, they like us from "Lain." And it was just dependent on "Lain" being huge over here.

PAUL: Basically, if you sign to a major label, these things happen overnight. But we never had fame. We were on a small label in Japan. It did okay, but it was really thanks to "Lain" the animation, that we got noted in this country.

GR: How did you hook up with Pioneer for the "Serial Experiments Lain" theme song?

JASMINE: We hooked up with Pioneer through the "Lain" connection. Polystar [the Japanese record label] distributed it to Americans through "Lain" [to Pioneer]. Basically, they decided they like us, we had a big Internet web site fan base, and a lot of Anime followers. That's what happened. They got interested.

GR: The music is great and the lyrics are

Led Zeppelin all the time.

PAUL: I think we were listening to the Led Zeppelin radio station [laughs].

GR: "Lain" was a huge success in Japan and America. Have you guys checked it out? If so, what did you think?

JASMINE: Yeah. I think it's absolutely great. Yoshitoshi Abe (character designer) is a very intelligent man. It's very interesting. It's a very deep, dark animation. There is a lot of good anime out there. This one is particularly good. I like it. It says a lot deep things.

GR: Are any of you into the whole Anime thing?

ALEX: "Lain." Especially "Lain." "Lain" is a good one.

STEVE: I wasn't sure about anime at first. But I sat down and watched it and I really enjoyed it. I loved every minute of it. I watched it about five times now, all in a row.

GR: Are any of you guys into computer or video games? If so, what platforms do you guys usually play? Any particular favorite titles?

STEVE: Why, ya gonna send us free stuff?

lot.

PAUL: Actually, I started playing Doom 2 again. I beat it again.

GR: What can we expect from Boa in the future? Any plans for future anime or video game-type projects?

JASMINE: We are currently writing a new album.

STEVE: We're going country.

JASMINE: We're going death-metal country, rap, hip-hop, and reggae. Except we're not. We're probably doing the same mish-mash of the same shit. No. Actually, that's really derogatory and I don't mean it. But that's what we're doing we're just concentrating on that.

GR: So will you be rapping in the next album?

JASMINE: Nah, really kidding.

PAUL: Following this interview, we'll be several years and a few albums of happiness. Then, inevitably because "what goes up, must come down" we will split up, hopefully amicably. Then hopefully, there will be several more years of happiness. And then we will eventually all die, because "what goes up, must come down."

- Nick Sithi and Enrique Galvez

AN INTERVIEW WITH

boa



very passionate. What are some of your influences?

STEVE: Hendrix, Zeppelin, Eric's Wedding and Jeff Buckley, that's about it really.

JASMINE: Jane's Addiction. Ella Fitzgerald. Bob Marley, Led Zeppelin, Led Zeppelin again for a hundred times.

STEVE: Did I mention Led Zeppelin?

JASMINE: Hendrix, I like a lot of hip-hop. Elvis Presley!

PAUL: A lot of classical music. Jane's Addiction, early Genesis for me and late Beatles. The Jam.

GR: Someone say Led Zeppelin again.

JASMINE: No no, you see. It's amazing since we've been here. They've playing

GR: Uhh.. maybe.

STEVE: Well then, a Playstation 2 please.

GR: You like PS2?

STEVE: I've never seen it.

JASMINE: Perfect Dark.

GR: Perfect Dark is really good!

JASMINE: But I'm really shits at it. I just spend the whole time going around looking at the ceiling because I can't organize it. Sorry!

PAUL: I'm a bit of a Tomb Raider fan. And Half-Life.

ALEX: Tomb Raider, Perfect Dark.

LEE: Half-Life. We play Half-Life online a



STARSHIP TROOPERS *chron.*

tristar • domestic DVD • rated R

Adapted religiously from Robert A. Heinlein's 1959 novel, "Roughnecks," *Starship Troopers Chronicles* offers a glimpse of the canvas on which Paul Verhoven painted one of the most underrated sci-fi epics ever, *Starship Troopers*. The pseudo-World War 2 satire launched illegally beautiful Denise Richard's career and proved once and for all that Verhoven (*Total Recall*, *RoboCop*) is the king of hardcore sci-fi. No one knows how to disconnect a human being quite the way Paul does. Executive produced by Verhoven, *Chronicles* is packed with plenty of strategic warfare, flying bug goo, and enough male posturing to make *Top Gun* look like Drivers Ed class. - *D. Halverson*



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

new line • domestic DVD • rated PG-13

What in God's name is Jeremy Irons doing in this thing? He was either paid a lottery winner's sum or he owed someone a favor. But what is better than the oddity of his actual presence is his performance. This isn't like watching Michael Caine sleep his way through *Jaws 4: The Revenge*. Oh no, Jeremy Irons attacks his role of the evil Profion with a delicious gusto of someone who just doesn't give a damn. Maybe he thought no one would see him in it. Or maybe he did this movie for his kids. Whatever the reason, Jeremy Irons' way-over-the-top performance is the only thing to recommend in this poorly staged take on the role playing universe of D&D. Fans of the game will enjoy a few inside jokes and attempts to follow the general rules of the game, but they will be insulted by the modern, idiotic leads, and deeply unconvincing CG work. Good for a laugh or two, but not bad enough to be great. - *Mike Hobbs*



LITTLE NICKY

new line home video • rated PG-13
domestic DVD

It's hard not to love a movie where the depiction of hell includes shoving a pineapple up Hitler's ass every day promptly at 4:00, but there are a couple of problems with *Little Nicky*. Adam Sandler may have shot over the heads of the teen minions who usually fill the seats for his brand of formulaic '80s-laced dufus-makes-good fable, while not shooting high enough to appease the next rung of moviegoers and fully tap the potential of his more esteemed cast-mates. Even so, I still think *Little Nicky* is his best work since Happy Gilmore. In fact, if you were to snip bits like the

hokey Flying Nun scene (where the effect looks about as good) where Nicky and his earthy squeeze sail away for a bird's-eye view of Popeye's Chicken, and insert one of the many deleted scenes where, for instance, Nicky and his Dad, the Devil, played lovingly by Harvey Keitel, are caught putting the final touches on the Monsters of Metal CD, you'd really have something. But hey, after *Bless the Child* and *Lost Souls* any devil movie parody is welcome in my Necrinomicon. And hey, I never miss an opportunity to see Ozzy bite the head of a bat. I'm sorry, but I liked it, talkin' dog and all. - *D. Halverson*



CINEMATATRIX DVD REVIEWS



		DAVE HALVERSON	MIKE HOBBS	BRADY FIECHTER	STEVE THOMASON	GR SAYS
LITTLE NICKY	new line	B-	D	C	D	C
SUPERMAN	warner bros.	C	A	A	A-	A
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS	new line	D-	D	D-	D	D
THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE	disney	B	B-	B-	B-	B-
STARSHIP TROOPERS CHRON.	tristar	B-	B-	C+	B-	B-
CHARLIES ANGELS	columbia/tristar	B+	C+	C+	C	C+

DVD Release Matrix: **Dec 19** *Dead Man*, *House of Games*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Road Trip* (rated and unrated), *Saving Grace*, *Seven* (Platinum Series), *Sid & Nancy*, *Small Time Crooks*, *Virgin Suicides*
Dec 26 *The Art of War*, *Courage Under Fire*, *The Exorcist: The Version You've Never Seen*, *Godzilla 2000*, *Predator (DTS)*, *The Siege (DTS)* **Jan 2** *Hollow Man*, *Nosferatu*, *The Way of The Gun*

WITCHY WOMAN: YANCY BUTLER

Yancy Butler expounds on gauntlets of might, assorted flavors of Pez, and her new TNT series, 'Witchblade.' -By Jon Gibson

The idea: adapt Top Cow's wildly successful comic, "Witchblade," into a two-hour, made-for-cable movie. Perhaps the execution would prove quite harrowing -- almost unfeasible (remember Fox's "Generation X" knock-off?). Casting famed heroine, NYPD detective Sara Pezzini, in human form -- even more difficult. Alas, Yancy Butler, better known for her action films *Hard Target* and *Drop Zone*, embodied every aspect the producers were committed to achieve, balancing a bulletproof exterior with a fragile conscience. "She manages to portray a strength and toughness and at the same time a real vulnerability, which is the core of Sara," executive producer Ralph Hemecker illustrates.

After phenomenal ratings and a stellar reaction from fans, the story expands into a weekly, hour-long drama this summer. A stylistic, atmospheric edge is the goal. In the same vein as *X-Men*, a cocktail of mortality and fantasy are the result.

From the great northern country of Canada, Ms. Butler plays a game of "finish that sentence":

In one word, "Witchblade" is...*wonderful*.

In two words: *intricately wonderful*.

Powerful women are...*exactly what we need to see in media and life today*.

Joan de Arc is to saint as Sara Pezzini is...*an asset to the NYPD and strong women around the world*.

Women wear bracelets because they are...*decorative*.

Sara wears the Witchblade gauntlet because...*she can't take it off and it protects her*.

She has been chosen to wear it because...*she's willful and has concealed vulnerability*.

The Witchblade's most convenient advantage is...*that it's starting to work for her when she needs it the most-instead of in our pilot, when it didn't*.

And its most disastrous drawback is...*that she's not completely in control of it yet. It's lending her to believe that she's losing her mind*.

Pez, a New York detective, and Pez, a sugary candy, are...*both sweet*.

So Pez is addictive because...*it's/she's cool*.

Critics who think comic books are for kids should...*get a life!*

Fans of the comic should expect...*to be taken on the best ride of their life*.

Those unfamiliar with the comic will...*be hook-line-and-sinkered*.

Like in the comic, a full-body Witchblade, wrapping from head to toe, will...*be*



very visually stimulating-I hope. Otherwise, I'm out of a job!

Boxer-briefs, a roaring Harley, a leather-clad attitude, and a hardened desire for revenge characterize Pez as...*a really hot chick. I dig her*.

So playing a tough-as-nails cop requires...*a lot of sleep and a lot of un-crankiness*.

Yet a penetrating hazel stare, blazing curves, a radio voice and a mod star face characterize Pez as...*extremely flattered!*

Hence, playing a sexy heroine requires...*walking a tightrope between being vulnerable, sexy and strong-and it's a fine line*.

Mixing both into the same body is exhilarating because...*it's like playing cops and robbers when you were a kid. It's just fun to embody different people and yet bring some of your own vulnerability and your own strength in*.

Thus, brushing up against Pez's nerves is a...*bad move*.

Today, TV is...*moving away from the formulaic answer-which is what we've done. To pontificate, it's not like: in the teaser, there's a crime and I solve it and then we're all having beers at the cop bar slapping our knees and laughing about it. [The show] is so intricate and so different. And it's something that I've never seen*.

So "Witchblade" fills the gap by...*giving a different kind of visual and mental stimulus*.

The silver screen and the small screen are different because of...*scheduling*.

But working of a weekly series is better because...*it's baptism by fire*.

Watching "Witchblade"...*will be the best ride of your life*.

Not watching "Witchblade" might...*disappoint you and your family members until the day that's it's all over. You'd be missing out*.

Between setups, the cast generally...*talks, plays Trivial Pursuit and sleeps*.

The chances of a musical episode of "Witchblade" are...*slim to nil-with my voice!?*

When slaughtering evil, don't ever forget to...*lufa in the shower beforehand; and brush your teeth*.

Finally, in one word, "Witchblade" is...*absolutely fantastic and unlike anything that anybody has ever seen*.



BLASTO

developer: sony

publisher: sony

release date: 1998

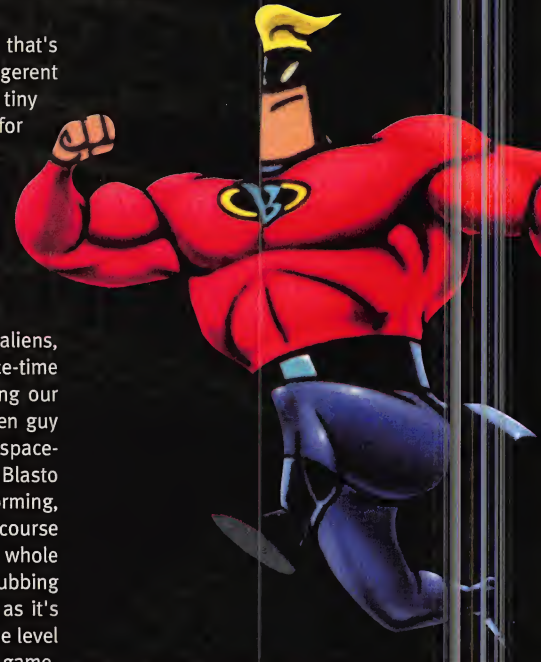
system: playstation

written by: dave halverson

I t's not that old a game, but dammit if Blasto didn't get a raw deal back when Sony had every intention of making him their main man. Perhaps the sudden, tragic death of Phil Hartman, who voiced the character, had something to do with it, or maybe a certain Bandicoot held Blasto back. Then again, the reviews weren't all that favorable either. But that was mostly because the buildup

outweighed the final product, or at least that's how it was perceived. Me, I took to the belligerent cartoon hero, with his massive torso and tiny legs, like a fish to water. Was it his concern for the lovely ladies or the funny way he walked, like the victim of an evil wedgie, that lured me in? Either way, it wasn't the first time I was in the minority. When it comes to quirky, slightly "off" games, I'm the man to talk to. And they don't get much more off than this.

Blasto's job is to stop a master race of aliens, bent on punching a hole through the space-time continuum and raiding the planet, enslaving our women and raping our cattle. (Hey, the alien guy said it, not me). Blasto heads 'em off at the spaceport and the action begins. The gameplay in Blasto is part third-person shooting, part platforming, and a part puzzle solving. And then of course you've got your big bad bosses, and that whole adventure thingy going on. The character dubbing (which is actually funny) is about as good as it's ever going to get for an action game, and the level design, although a tad confusing as the game presses on, is pretty much great. Graphically Sony kept it simple, combining flat shaded and textured polys for a specific cartoon look and feel. The control gets props too, as it incorporates dual analog, a nifty strafe, and a quick turn-around that really helps move the action along. As PS games begin to fade away, Blasto is one you'll definitely want to pick up, not only for its dubious past, but because it's challenging and fun. Besides, when it comes to savin' Uranus, no one does it better than Blasto.





COMING NEXT MONTH

100			100
85			85
70			70
55			55
40			40
25			25
10			10

ISSUE

#36

NUMBER THIRTY-SIX



AUGUST 2001

This year's E3 is shaping up to be perhaps the most significant in the trade show's history. Microsoft will be showing its hand with Xbox, announcing formal launch strategies and pricing and Sony will be riding high on the stunning, late-generation PS2 offerings like FFX. We'll see Sega in a transitional phase, as they move from a hardware/software maker to software only. But what has most of us here more excited than anything is seeing exactly what is going on with Gamecube. What has Miyamoto got up his sleeve? How powerful is the system? How much will it cost? All these questions and more will be answered next month.

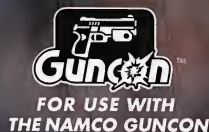
TIME CRISIS PROJECT TITAN

2nd Place

Sorry loser, this ain't like a race.
Here's your reward
for second place.

Congratulations! You're history

Get a tight grip on your Guncon™ and be ready to pull the trigger — a lot — because in this mission, it's finish or perish. And let's hope you've got a fast aim. Time will be flying as fast as the ammo.



Animated Violence



All new and enhanced graphics.



All new Consecutive Hits Counter:
Shoot straight. Live longer.

Gain clearer shots with awesome
new multi-hiding feature.



Comes with Guncon—still the
straightest shooting lightgun
out there.



Classic Time Crisis
"Duck 'n Shoot" System.

